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Conversation highlights inequity in US territories. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Ayuyu: Military involvement could boost CNMI economy

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Commonwealth Ports Authority chair Joe Ayuyu said yesterday that military involvement in the CNMI could boost the CNMI's economy.

In line with this, the administration of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios met with U.S. Department of Defense leaders about a week ago to discuss a partnership that would be beneficial to both the CNMI and the military.

Ayuyu, who joined Palacios at this meeting, said one of the ideas brought up is the establishment of a "marine highway" that will establish a ferry service in the

See AYUYU on Page 4

Ayuyu

Atalig, 2 contractors appear before House committee probing BOOST

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

In this screen grab photo from a YouTube video, former Department of Finance secretary David DLG Atalig, right, and his counsel, Bruce Berline, appear yesterday before the House of Representatives Special Committee on Federal Assistance & Disaster-related Funding that is continuing the investigation into the previous administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity, and Stability Together grant program. Atalig was directed to testify on March 12, 13, and 14, 2024.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Former Department of Finance secretary David DLG Atalig and two contractors of the previous administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity, and Stability Together grant program appeared yesterday before a House of Representatives committee that is investigating how the

See ATALIG on Page 4

Senate confirms Tenorio's nomination to judgeship

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Acting Gov. David M. Apatang congratulates deputy attorney general Lillian Ada Tenorio shortly after the Senate unanimously confirmed her nomination to serve as an associate judge for the CNMI Superior Court.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate unanimously confirmed yesterday the appointment of deputy attorney general Lillian Ada Tenorio to serve as an

See SENATE on Page 4

Tribal violence in PNG kills 26 combatants and unconfirmed number of bystanders

By ROD McGUIRK
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—At least 26 combatants and an unconfirmed number of bystanders were killed in a gunbattle between warring tribes in Papua New Guinea, police said Monday.

A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way

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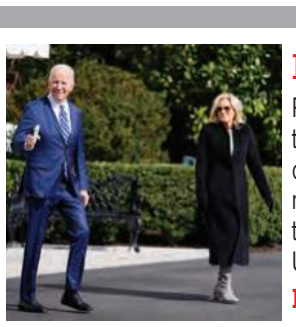
INSIDE

BUSINESS
Bank of Guam continues its trailblazing journey into 2024, announcing the launch of banking services for the cannabis industry in Guam and the Northern Marianas.
PAGE 11



NATION
President Joe Biden said Friday that the apparent death of Russian anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny brings new urgency to the need for Congress to approve tens of billions of dollars for Ukraine to stave off Moscow's invasion.
PAGE 12

LIFE & STYLE
An unknown number of sacred statues of Hindu deities were stolen and smuggled abroad in the past. Now dozens are being repatriated to the Himalayan nation, part of a growing global effort to return such items to countries in Asia, Africa and elsewhere.
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Local

Lawyer calls out Torres' team's 'delaying tactics'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Assistant attorney general James Kingman has called out former governor Ralph DLG Torres' defense team's pattern of delaying court proceedings in his ongoing white-collar crime cases and is asking the court to do something about it.

Two white-collar crime cases filed against the former governor remain pending, with the first one filed nearly two years ago while the most recent one (which includes a contempt charge) was filed last year.

In the case involving contempt, Torres' defense lawyer, Joaquin Torres, argued that his client was essentially being deprived of his right to a probable cause hearing. This resulted in Superior Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas pushing back Torres' arraignment.

Kingman already stated in an earlier interview that he is not surprised as he is aware of Torres' defense team's pattern of delaying court proceedings. However, in a recent response to the defense's motion for probable cause hearing determination, Kingman reiterated the statement and called for the court to "do something about it."

"Sanctions are appropriate if a document is filed for an improper purpose such as harassing, [which] causes unnecessary delay or increases the costs of litigation,"

He said Torres' lawyers are filing motions with one clear purpose in mind: to delay the trial in the hope of waiting out the special prosecutor or hoping that there will be political intervention to prevent adjudication of the legal process.

"The clearest 'rules for thee and not for me' pattern by the defense has to do with its peripatetic relationship with filing deadlines. In each of the prior proceedings, they have asked the court to strike filings for them being 'out of time.' This is despite them filing motions to reconsider 220 days after such final rulings while attempting to rely on rules that require such motions be filed within 10 days of the challenged decision," he said.

King is now calling for the court to do something about the defense's pattern.

"[I have] made peace with the type of behavior that defendant's counsel exhibits. But the duty to police such behavior is on the Judiciary and the Bar, not the prosecution," he said.

Kingman said both the NMI Judiciary and the NMI Bar Association should recognize that behavior like this that go unsanctioned undermines faith in the legal process and legitimacy of the body.

"Unfortunately, this pattern of impunity for the powerful of the CNMI long predates the defendant. And the complete recusal of the entire Judiciary when it comes to this defendant means that the court who has been called in from outside the Commonwealth to uphold principles of justice and the rule of law, must do the hard and right thing. When our brethren lack the will or capacity to do what is right and good, it only elevates the need for vigilance and diligence from those who are called," he said.

Aside from this, Kingman is also asking Barcinas to deny the motion for a probable cause determination, saying the motion is part of a pattern by Torres' team of pretending to have legitimate concerns.

"It is simply the most recent in a series of increasingly silly and desperate efforts to impede the legal process. Such petulant lawmongering is not merely insulting but sanctionable," he said

He said giving in to the defense's newest motion will only continue to delay the straightforward legal issues beyond the point of adjudication and denying the Commonwealth's interest in the administration of justice.

"Given the history of this defendant's abuse of legal process, the court must take the opportunity to establish where it stands," said Kingman.

SHRM meeting to discuss WIAO Apprenticeship Program

The CNMI Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management will host a general membership meeting, taking place at the Azucena Room, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, starting at 11:30am. Doors will open at 11am.

This month's meeting will delve into a crucial topic that resonates with the local workforce—the Apprentice Program, facilitated by the Workforce Investment Agency Office under the CNMI Department of Labor. The session aims to provide valuable insights into the program's significance, impact, and opportunities for both employers and aspiring professionals.

Highlighting the event is guest speaker Joe Villacrusis, program manager at the Workforce Investment Agency Office. With a wealth of experience and expertise in workforce development, Villacrusis is poised to deliver a comprehensive overview of the Apprentice Program, shedding light on its key features, success stories, and the ways in which it contributes to the growth of the CNMI workforce.

The following fees apply:

- $40 for members
- $45 for non-members

This meeting will include lunch.

SHRM is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. The society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, and more than 575 affiliated chapters.

The CNMI Chapter is affiliated with the national organization. ***(PR)***

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

4.7-magnitude in the CNMI

At 5:21am on Feb. 20, 2024, a 4.7-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Mariana Islands region. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

6.0-magnitude earthquake hits Colonia

At 9:40pm on Feb. 14, 2024, a report of a 6.0-magnitude earthquake occurred 172 kilometers north northeast of Colonia, Federated States of Micronesia. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

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- In Job Training for a minimum of 10 hours per week, OR
- Attending an education program on a full-time basis
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- Child must reside with the parent who is in an CCDF approved activity (work, school or training).
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For more information regarding eligibility requirements, please contact CCDF Eligibility Workers at:

- For Saipan, please contact 670-664-2589/95/75/76
- For Tinian, please contact 670-433-2233
- For Rota, please contact 670-532-3222

You may also visit **childcare.gov.mp** for more information or to download the CCDF Subsidy Waitlist Application Packet.

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DCCA Child Care & Development Fund

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Department of Community and Cultural Affairs
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program
Caller Box 10007 Bldg. No. 1347/1344 Ascension Drive
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Website: www.childcare.gov.mp

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2	4,587.00
3	5,667.00
4	6,746.00
5	7,825.00
6	8,905.00
7	9,108.00
8	9,306.00
9	9,512.00

Sliding Fee Scale/Monthly Co-payments

Family Income	Family Size 1	Family Size 2	Family Size 3	Family Size 4	Family Size 5	Family Size 6 Max limit $120.00	Family Size 7 Max limit $120.00	Family Size 8 Max limit $120.00	Family Size 9 Max limit $120.00
$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
$1 to $1500	waived	waived	waived	waived	waived	waived	waived	waived	waived
$1501 to $2500	$10.00	$20.00	$30.00	$40.00	$50.00	$60.00	$70.00	$80.00	$90.00
$2501 to $3000	$20.00	$30.00	$40.00	$50.00	$60.00	$70.00	$80.00	$90.00	$100.00
$3001 to $3508	$30.00	$40.00	$50.00	$60.00	$70.00	$80.00	$90.00	$100.00	$110.00
$3509 to $4587		$50.00	$60.00	$70.00	$80.00	$90.00	$100.00	$110.00	$120.00
$4588 to $5667			$70.00	$80.00	$90.00	$100.00	$110.00	$120.00	$120.00
$5668 to $6746				$90.00	$100.00	$110.00	$120.00	$120.00	$120.00
$6747 to $7825					$110.00	$120.00	$120.00	$120.00	$120.00
$7826 to $8905						*$130.00	$120.00	$120.00	$120.00
$8906 to $9108							$120.00	$120.00	$120.00
$9109 to $9306								$120.00	$120.00
$9307 to $9512									$120.00

Note: For families with 5 or more children, the maximum co-payment limit will be at $120.00 monthly.
*This will apply to family size of 6 in a 2-parent household.

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Source/s of Income
Salary and Wages: _____
Pension: _____
Unemployment: _____
Workmen's Comp: _____
Rental Income: _____
Alimony: _____
Military Allotment: _____
Child Support: _____
Food Stamp: _____
WIC: _____
Others: _____
Comments: _____
Check dates: _____ to _____

Eligibility Disposition:
Family Size: _____
Eligibility Level: _____
Monthly Gross Income: _____
Income Larger than Eligibility Scale: _____
Income below eligibility scale: _____
Co-payment: _____

Eligibility completed by/date:
Comments:

Recommended for: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval
Notes:
Eligibility Specialist Initials: _____

Conversation highlights inequity in US territories

By JENISHA DUBRALL
jenisha.dubrall321@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

The Northern Marianas College and the non-profit Right to Democracy joined forces last Feb. 19, 2024, to host a conversation on democracy, equity, and self-determination in U.S. territories at the American Memorial Park Visitor Center Theater, with the speakers highlighting the discriminatory nature of how citizens in the territories are treated compared to the rest of the nation.

Moderated by William J. Fife, who is an associate professor at Northern Marianas College and a former Public School System history teacher, the panel of advocates was made up of Charles V. Ala'ilima, co-counsel in the *Fitisemanu v. United States* case (American Samoa); Pamela Colon, co-counsel in the *Borja v. Nago* case (U.S. Virgin Islands); Neil Weare, co-director, Right to Democracy (Guam); and Kimberlyn King-Hinds, local counsel of the *Tinian Women Association et al. v. U.S. Department of the Navy et al.* case (CNMI).

Colon shared her experience of how she has always exercised her right to vote in Chicago, Illinois, since turning 18 years old, yet lost that right when she moved to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

It was there where she discovered that the U.S. Virgin Islands residents do not cast their votes for the U.S. presidential elections and she could not believe that she had lost her right to vote.

It wasn't until her son turned 15 that it occurred to her that when he turns 18, he would have to register for Selective Service. It woke her up to the circumstances they were in.

"Upon registering, neither he nor I would be able to vote for his commander-in-chief. Neither he nor I will be able to vote for the people who would declare war. Neither he nor I would be able to vote for the people who would fund any war if it were declared," she said.

That was when Colon decided to take action by visiting the local high schools to inform them that they would deal with the same issues as her son. About 10 years ago, she was asked to be a plaintiff in a case regarding absentee ballots.

In the American Samoa experience, Ala'ilima said being American nationals means "you owe your duties to the United States but the U.S. does not owe that same fidelity back to you."

JENISHA DUBRALL/

From left, moderator William J. Fife, an associate professor at Northern Marianas College, Charles V. Ala'ilima, co-counsel, *Fitisemanu v. United States* (American Samoa), Pamela Colon, co-counsel, *Borja v. Nago* (U.S. Virgin Islands), Neil Weare, co-director, Right to Democracy (Guam), and Kimberlyn King-Hinds, local counsel, *Tinian Women Association et al. v. United States Department of the Navy et al*. (CNMI).

He said last Feb. 19's program is not intended to tell people where to go or what to do, but "to set the stage so that the people can dance on that stage," and that stage is subject to the U.S. Constitution and its principles.

Weare shared his experience at a summit in New York City, which involved more than 50 community leaders from the five territories. "Common ground came out in a conversation—that so many folks just want to have a say in the decisions that impact their lives," Weare said, adding that he believes everyone must recognize that there is a problem before someone can act to fix it.

King-Hinds gave the Northern Marianas' perspective on the issue and agreed with Colon on how it is problematic that U.S. citizens in the territories do not have the ability to vote for the U.S. President.

One of the attendees, Emma Chong, learned from the conversations that the CNMI's relationship with the U.S. federal government is not obscure, but very particular.

Chong believes that compared to the other U.S. territories, the CNMI has more autonomy, though not by much, yet that comes at a cost such as relinquishing certain powers like having a U.S. delegate that has no vote in Congress.

"I would still fight and advocate for a stronger voice in the White House, but I also think there is not a clear way to go about that, given the CNMI's relationship with the U.S. Though if we were to proceed with advocacy for a stronger voice, it would have to be through the court systems, devised through lawsuits with our government officials and the community working in tandem under a unified agreement," she said.

In light of all she's learned from the conversations, Chong believes that CNMI history should be a two-semester course taught within the Public School System to raise awareness of the fight it took to create today's CNMI and the rights that its citizens have or do not have.

"I firmly believe we are being misdealt by the federal government in being second-class citizens," said Chong.

Volunteer for Democratic Party's Presidential Primary on March 12

The NMI Democratic Party is looking for volunteers on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to assist with next month's Presidential Primary. Volunteers are needed to assist with registration, ballot access, ballot tabulation, voter file registry, and other duties. Those interested can text the word VOLUNTEER to 484- DEMS (3367) or email the word VOLUNTEER to info@nmidems.org with their name and contact information. Visit www.nmidems.org to learn more and become a volunteer today.

On the ballot for the Democratic Party of the Northern Mariana Island's Presidential Primary, scheduled for March 5-12, are President Joe R. Biden Jr., Jason M. Palmer, Rep. Dean Phillips (Minnesota), and Marianne Williamson.

Anyone interested in participating in the primary must be a U.S. citizen, a resident of the Northern Mariana Islands, and 18 years of age or eligible to vote on or before Nov. 5, 2024. Democrats on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will be able to visit designated polling sites, register to vote if they haven't already, register with the party, and cast votes for their preferred Democratic presidential candidate.

During the Presidential Primary, NMI Democrats will elect eight delegates to represent the CNMI at the 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The convention will nominate the Democratic Party candidates for President and Vice President of the United States of America. The final day of the NMI primaries on March 12 will be held on Saipan at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center on Susupe, with simultaneous sub-primaries on Tinian and Rota. Additional details are forthcoming.

Individuals interested in becoming delegates to the 2024 Democratic National Convention pledged to one of the presidential candidates are encouraged to visit www.nmidems.org, download the Delegate Candidacy form, complete the form, and email it to NMI Democratic Party chair Jonathan P. Cabrera at cabrerajjp@gmail.com. The deadline to file delegate candidacies is Monday, Feb. 26, 2024.

Party executive director Nola Hix is hoping to see more of the CNMI's youth participate in the exciting first ever Presidential Primary next month: "The 2022 elections hosted the largest voter turnout in the CNMI's history with over 19,275 voters registered, and 14,750 voters who exercised their rights to vote. That was phenomenal, and we encourage [Northern Marianas College], and the public and private schools to continue to turn out that vote by encouraging students to participate. I encourage teachers to find incentives on getting their students to register to vote where they can, making it count by voting in upcoming elections, and it doesn't hurt to get involved by volunteering as well."

To learn more about the presidential candidates and the delegate selection plan, visit www.nmidems.org. ***(PR)***

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Saipan, CNMI
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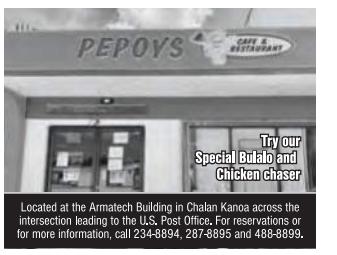

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Woman in drug trafficking case faces possible 4-year sentence

A woman who has pleaded guilty to her involvement in a scheme to smuggle drugs into the CNMI through the U.S. Postal Service faces a possible four-year sentence, but her lawyer argues she should be sentenced to a shorter prison term.

Gao Xing Rui, one of three defendants charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 1,809 grams of methamphetamine that arrived in the mail on June 21–22, 2022, is up for sentencing this Friday.

Gao's co-defendants are Yang Chun and Wang Yurong. The two have since both been issued imprisonment sentences of 70 months and 46 months, respectively.

The United States, through assistant U.S. Attorney Albert Flores, has recommended a sentence of 57 months or roughly four years.

"To maintain consistency in sentencing and to promote fairness, the government now recommends defendant be sentenced to 57 months incarceration. This recommendation is consistent with defendant's plea agreement," he said.

Gao's lawyer, Richard C. Miller, has recommended a much shorter sentence of 37 months, claiming his client was the least culpable of the three.

"Ms. Gao is the last of three defendants to be sentenced for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute. … She is the least culpable of the three. Yang, who directed the activities of Wang and Ms. Gao, was sentenced to 70 months in prison. Wang texted back and forth with Yang on WeChat about the arrival of the parcel, retrieved the parcel from a white Prius and brought it to her apartment, and was paid handsomely for her services. She was sentenced to 46 months' imprisonment. Ms. Gao's role in the conspiracy was largely limited to selling packets of meth to customers whom Yang identified for her," he said.

Unlike her co-defendants, Miller said, Gao had no role in arranging for the meth to be smuggled to Saipan.

"Yang told investigators that he and Wang were paid directly for their roles in receiving the package—Yang was paid $500 and Wang $1,500. He told investigators that Gao just got small amounts of meth to sell," he said.

Gao is set to appear before the U.S. District Court for the NMI this Friday for her sentencing hearing.

According to the complaint against Gao, between June 21, 2022 and June 22, 2022, she conspired and agreed with Yang and Wang, along with others, to possess methamphetamine, a Schedule II controlled substance, with intent to distribute.

In December 2022, Yang, 45, and Wang, 49, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a federally controlled substance. ***(Kimberly B. Esmores)***

TRIBAL

From page 1

to attack a neighboring tribe when they were ambushed Sunday in Enga province in the South Pacific nation's remote highlands, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Acting Superintendent George Kakas said.

Police Commissioner David Manning later described the clash as a "gunbattle between warring tribes." An unconfirmed number of villagers also were killed. Police reinforcements were sent to the scene of the battle, Manning said.

"At this point, it's not clear exactly how far we have moved into the conflict there," Manning told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "But the intent is to regain control or have a significant presence in that conflict area and then work ... our way through our procedures in dealing with this type of incident."

Kakas initially said 53 combatants had died. But security forces later revised the death toll down to 26.

Bodies were collected from the battlefield, roads and the riverside, then loaded onto police trucks and taken to the hospital. Authorities were still counting "those who were shot, injured and ran off into the bushes," Kakas said.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said he had "great concern" about the violence in Enga and urged the warring tribes to lay down their weapons.

"If there are community disputes, there are ways to deal with the community disputes," Marape said.

"Lay down your arms. A lot of disputes will be resolved. One killing or two killings doesn't solve the problem. It contributes towards more problems," he added.

John Luther, a leader of Akom village whose warriors were among those ambushed, talked down the prospect of an escalation of the violence in retaliation for the deaths.

"We've lost a lot of lives. I don't feel we should be able be to retaliate. We're already weak in numbers," Luther told the AP.

"I don't think I would allow my people to go fighting again," Luther added.

The villagers were ambushed from a school building while on a mission to avenge the death of a woman killed in a neighboring allied village, he said.

ATALIG

From page 1

grant program was run.

Atalig appeared with his lawyer, Bruce Berline. Contractors Robert Travilla and Shayne Villanueva appeared with lawyers, Joseph Horrey and Keith Chambers, respectively. The three were not required to testify yesterday.

The hearing before the Special Committee on Federal Assistance & Disaster-related Funding will continue today, Wednesday, at 2pm, with the start of Travilla's testimony.

Travilla and Villanueva, along with contractor Salina Sapp, were in charge of marketing the BOOST Program. The program used $17 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds that some former and current House members alleged were given to many of the previous administration's cronies.

Atalig, Travilla, and Villanueva were compelled to appear and testify before the committee via subpoenas issued by the special committee, which is chaired by Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan).

Yumul told Atalig he would not be testifying that day, Tuesday, and asked him to return to testify on March 12, 13, and 14, 2024. Atalig said he has to double-check his calendar, but the dates seem to be fine at the moment. Berline, on the other hand, said he just heard the new dates so he is unsure as yet.

Atalig said he believes that he is supposed to be on a medical trip for his wife toward the end of March 2024. "But I'll just have to confirm that," he added.

Berline asked the committee to give them a day or two to check their calendar, then he can reach out to the House legal counsel if that is acceptable. The committee did not object.

With respect to Travilla, Yumul tentatively set the hearing schedule for 2pm today, Wednesday, for Travilla to start his testimony. Yumul said they, however, will wait for Horrey's advice to the House counsel later that day, Tuesday, if the schedule is fine. Horrey said they believe that those dates are fine, but they need to double-check and will let the House counsel know before the end of today. The committee did not object.

Horrey is also counsel for Sapp, who is scheduled to testify on Feb. 27, 28, and 29, 2024.

Villanueva, on the other hand, was told yesterday to testify on March 5, 6, and 7, 2024 at 10am.

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) created the special committee on May 2, 2023, and it has been doing its due diligence on the BOOST program in the past few months.

Yumul said the committee has already reviewed testimonies from William Castro, former Department of Commerce Economic Development director Jesus Taisague, former Department of Commerce secretary Edward M. DeLeon Guerrero, and Bank of Saipan from their appearances before the 22nd Legislature.

"So we're here today to listen to the last witnesses who are involved the program which we have scheduled throughout the next couple of weeks," Yumul said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

AYUYU

From page 1

Marianas, thus linking the different islands.

"When we were in Washington, we were pushing for this concept of a 'marine highway,' which would allow us to have a ferry system between the islands. We're trying to convince the federal government as well as DOD that it is so critical for their operation," he said.

If that happens, Ayuyu believes it will help lower the cost of shipping items for the military between the islands.

"At the same time, it would benefit the local economy because our people would be able to take advantage of the ferry and encourage economic development," he said.

This would also open up the possibility of shipping agricultural goods between all the islands in the Marianas, Ayuyu said.

"For example, when [exporting] agriculture products from Rota to Guam or to Saipan, a ferry would definitely lower the cost," he added.

Ayuyu cited the experiences of both Guam and Hawaii when it comes to boosting the economy by involving the U.S. military.

"Even when tourism is down, the economy can continue to function and provide employment to their people. Out here, when tourism is down, we're dead in the water. We have no back up. It makes a lot of sense for us to connect with the military," he said.

At the same time, working with the U.S. military means the CNMI will be contributing to national defense, he said.

"Hopefully, in the next couple of years, things are going to start happening and we have a bright future," he said.

Ayuyu shared that the CNMI administration and DOD leaders also discussed the possibility of improving the CNMI's ports, which would include widening and deepening the Saipan channels, which has proven to be hard to maneuver.

"One of the things we wanted to do was talk to the decision makers of the Department of Defense to impress upon them that we want to work with them and to see what they can do to help us develop and expand our port here. This is not only for military use, but it would also encourage more cruises and shipping companies to come into the CNMI. The military has been very receptive to the idea and is working with us. This will take some time but we will continue to talk to the federal leaders about this," he said.

SENATE

From page 1

associate judge of the Superior Court.

All nine senators voted "yes" to approve the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigation committee report that recommended the confirmation of Tenorio's judicial appointment.

Meanwhile, the Senate also unanimously confirmed yesterday the re-appointment of Dr. Rita A. Sablan and Alvaro A. Santos to serve as members of the Marianas Public Land Trust board of trustees.

Sablan and Santos will serve a six-year terms expiring on Jan. 9, 2030. Sablan will represent Saipan and the women sector, while Santos will represent Saipan.

In an interview shortly after her confirmation, Tenorio, 61, said she is just very happy that the confirmation process is already done. The EAGI Committee, which reviewed her nomination, held three hearings on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

She said committee members asked some interesting questions and she believes they were satisfied with her answers.

"I'm happy. I'm looking forward to moving on from here and serving the people of the Commonwealth as an associate judge for the Superior Court," Tenorio said.

As the fourth woman to be confirmed as a Superior Court judge, Tenorio said this will hopefully inspire more women.

Tenorio said her interest in the law and policy began at the Legislature, where she previously worked as a legislative legal assistant.

Tenorio's family and siblings were present at the confirmation hearing.

Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, who attended the confirmation hearing in his capacity as acting governor, said in an interview that he and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios are very happy that they nominated Tenorio and that the senators confirmed her nomination.

"She is going to be a good judge. She is going to work for our people. We know her for a long time. She got the integrity, honesty," Apatang said.

At the session, EAGI Committee chair Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) said the role of an associate judge demands not only legal expertise but also an unwavering sense of integrity and the fortitude to navigate the complexities of the legal system with compassion and wisdom.

Babauta said Tenorio is an experienced lawyer whose credentials, experience and even-handed approach to the administration of justice make her an outstanding candidate for the Superior Court.

"What truly qualifies her for this esteemed position is her character. Those who know her best speak of her impartiality and her passion for constitutional law, impartiality and strong moral compass," Babauta said.

She said Tenorio's ascension to the bench reminds all that the pursuit of justice should know no bounds of race, gender, or background.

"It is my privilege to recommend and advance Mrs. Tenorio's nomination to confirm her as the fourth female and daughter of the CNMI to be the next associate judge for the CNMI Judiciary," Babauta said.

Tenorio is the daughter of the first CNMI lieutenant governor, the late Francisco Castro Ada, and the late Ines Seman Ada.

With respect to the nomination of Sablan and Santos, Babauta said the position of MPLT trustee holds a vital role in the community as it safeguards precious resources granted and ensures responsible management and fosters economic development for the benefit of the communities. She said selecting the right individuals to serve on the MPLT board is paramount.

Guam Air Guard's Security Forces Squadron participates in Cope North

BARRIGADA, Guam— About 20 airmen from the Guam Air National Guard's 254th Security Forces Squadron "Defenders" are on active duty orders to secure fighter jets operating from the Guam International Airport during Cope North 24, during the month of February. Among those charged with the security mission are Master Sgts. Jordanna Escobar and Mistly Palomo, commanded by Lt. Col. Stephen Leon Guerrero.

"Our mission is to perform airfield security, including entry control points, roving patrols, and a base defense operations center," said Escobar.

The airmen are working out of a newly acquired Domestic Operations Trailer, which houses office space for computer stations and communications equipment, exterior floodlights, and an arms room to store weapons. The work being performed by the Defenders allows pilots participating in Cope North 24 to integrate with civilian airports, enabling more options for takeoff and landing during Cope North 24, part of the Air Force's concept of agile combat employment.

Cope North 24 is a multinational, U.S. Pacific Air Forces-sponsored, field training exercise focused on airborne integration for large-force employment and agile combat employment. Aimed to further integrate ally and partner contributions toward enhancing security and stability to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific, approximately 1700 U.S. airmen, Marines, and sailors are training alongside 700 Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Royal Australian Air Force, French Air and Space Force, Royal Canadian Air Force, and Republic of Korea Air Force service members. By the end of the exercise, about 85 allied aircraft will have flown 1400 missions across three islands and six airfields.

Lt. Col. Stephen Leon Guerrero, commander of the 254th SFS, expressed the importance and pride with which his Defenders have volunteered for this mission. "Participating in named exercises like Cope North gives our airmen an opportunity to see their critical role in not only the defense of Guam and the Marianas, but how we fit in the larger National Defense Strategy and the ACE concept. It gives us a sense of purpose and pride in our role as Defenders of our Island, and our free way of life," said Leon Guerrero.

According to Palomo, being from Guam helped smooth the process working with civilian counterparts with the Guam airport, and added a sense of meaning to the mission. "We're all from here, and we all know the mission," said Palomo. "It's nice to already have that relationship with our civilian counterparts, which is part of our culture, and it just feels natural. We're so proud to do this to represent our island and the United States Air Force." ***(PR)***

US NATIONAL GUARD

U.S. Air Force Master Sgts. Jordanna Escobar, left, and Misty Palomo of the Guam Air National Guard 254th Security Forces Squadron, pull security on a U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon at the A.B. Won Pat Guam International Airport during Exercise Cope North, Feb. 9, 2024.

Volunteers needed for *fanihi* count on Feb. 29

Organizers are looking for volunteers for the 3rd Annual Tinian Island-Wide *Fanihi* Count set on Feb. 29, from 4:30am to 6:30am.

For questions or to volunteer, contact Tammy Mildenstein at (406) 214-1563 or via email at tammy.mildenstein@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2024

THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS PAID FOR BY NMHC WITH CPD FUNDS.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, **through the** Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is announcing the availability of an **estimated** $1,550,603.00 in Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. NMHC anticipates receiving an estimated amount of $980,125.00 in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); $489,268.00 in Home Investment Partnerships (HOME); and, $81,210.00 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds for Program Year (PY) 2024.

The CDBG funds, authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, may be used for a wide range of community development activities to revitalize neighborhoods, provide affordable housing, expand economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services. However, use of these funds must meet at least one of the national objectives which include: 1) to benefit low and moderate-income families; 2) to eliminate slum or blight conditions; or 3) to meet other urgent community development needs.

The CDBG program requires a grant recipient to certify that it will minimize displacement of persons as a result of activities assisted with CDBG funds. The CNMI government does not plan on undertaking any activity which will cause displacement of persons. In the event of any unforeseen displacement resulting from any CDBG funded activity, the CNMI government will comply with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, its implementing regulation and applicable local law.

HOME funds may be used to create affordable housing through financing assistance, site acquisition or improvement, and rehabilitating existing residential dwellings as well as providing funds for new construction or purchase of a single-family residential dwelling. Use of HOME funds must benefit low-income families.

ESG funds may be used to rehabilitate or convert to buildings into homeless shelters and for shelter operating expenses, supportive services and homeless prevention **and rapid re-housing** activities. Use of ESG funds must benefit the homeless.

Applications for the use of CPD funds are available for pick up at the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) located in Garapan, Saipan; NMC Campus Bldg. A, San Jose Village, Tinian; and, Sinapalo III Village, Rota, beginning December 13, 2023.

You may also obtain the application online at www.nmhcgov.net in the section titled "Community Planning Development (CDBG)"

Applications must be submitted to the NMHC Offices in Garapan, Saipan (Saipan Residents); NMC Bldg. A, San Jose, Tinian (Tinian Residents); and, Sinapalo III Village, Rota (Rota Residents) by ***March 13, 2024, no later than 4:30 p.m. Applications submitted after March 13, 2024, will not be accepted.***

A briefing will be conducted for interested applicants and for those applicants who have picked up an application for the use of CPD funds. The briefing will address the program requirements and regulations concerning the usage of CPD funds.

The schedules for briefing are as follows:

February 14, 2024, 5:30 p.m. for the island of Saipan
February 15, 2024, 5:30 p.m. for the island of Tinian
February 16, 2024 5:30 p.m. for the island of Rota

We are encouraging all non-profit, for profit, and government service providers who are providing services to people with disabilities, homeless individuals, and emergency shelter administrators and operators to attend this briefing.

For residents living on the island of Saipan, the briefing will held at the NMHC Office in Garapan; Residents living on the island of Tinian, the briefing will be held at the NMHC Office at the NMC Campus, Building A; and Residents living on the island of Rota, the briefing will be held at the Rota Mayor's Office Conference Room in Tatachog.

Accommodations for disabled individuals or other non-English speaking individuals who wish to attend the briefing are available upon request by giving at least 24 hours notice prior to the meeting so that such needs can be arranged and provided. Additional inquiries, concerning the CPD program, such as eligibility criteria and program requirements, may be directed to Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director or Ms. Tricia Tenorio, Planner at 234-6866 or 233-0076

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
ITB NO.: RFP24-DCCA/DYS-42400044

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 21, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE COUNSELING AND WRAP AROUND SERVICES FOR THE DCCA-DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES CLIENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS SERVED UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES, EMERGENCY SHELTER, JUVENILE PROBATION AND THE FAMILY AND YOUTH ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO THE DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES, BY MARCH 15, 2024, TO MS. VIVIAN T. SABLAN VIA EMAIL AT vtsablan@dys.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ VIVIAN T. SABLAN
ADMINISTRATOR,DYS

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

AMENDED PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairperson of the Board, is hereby giving notice that a Resumed Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at the NMHC Conference Room, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
  a. Call to Order
  b. Roll Call
  c. Adoption of Agenda
  d. Adoption of Minutes: December 28, 2023 Meeting Minutes

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
  a. NMHC Divisions
  b. CDBG-DR Updates

IV. DEPUTY CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
  a. CPD Updates

V. OLD BUSINESS
  a. None

VI. NEW BUSINESS
  a. CDBG-DR Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Program Amendment
  b. FY 2025 Budget
  c. Personnel Committee Report

VII. LEGAL COUNSEL'S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

IX. OTHER MATTERS

X. ADJOURNMENT

(Notes: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13 (a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
Merced (Marcie) M. Tomokane
Chairperson of the Board

UOG professor is chief scientist on National Geographic expedition

The waters around Guam bore witness to a significant coral bleaching event several years ago. Rising sea temperatures during the last El Niño stressed corals to the point of expelling their symbiotic algae, draining them of color and leaving behind whitened skeletal frames along the ocean shallows.

Corals around Guam were not the only victims of this climate stressor. Reefs in the Federated States of Micronesia were not spared from the bleaching event, but the story differs for reefs in the FSM's remote atolls. There, researchers are finding that more corals managed to survive the event compared to those around the main islands in the FSM.

UOG

University of Guam's Marine Laboratory professor of coral reef and fisheries ecology Dr. Peter Houk.

UOG

From the top, Alik William, Trenton Skilling, Bersin Elias, and Bond Segal, core members of the Micronesia Coral Reef Monitoring team, dive in an area off Pingelap Atoll in the Federated States of Micronesia as part of a research expedition involving the University of Guam, National Geographic Pristine Seas, FSM government, Micronesia Conservation Trust, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Waitt Institute.

Scientists anticipated that, with more fish around to help promote growth and less pollution affecting them, reefs in these atolls would have a greater chance for recovery. But scientists had "no clue" corals there would also be more resistant to bleaching, according to Dr. Peter Houk, professor of coral reef and fisheries ecology at the University of Guam's Marine Laboratory.

UOG

Lettuce coral in a reef off of Pingelap Atoll in Pohnpei. The coral survived despite the heat stress during the last El Niño several years ago. Scientists are interested to see if the coral will survive another heat stress expected next year.

"In fact, based on what we know about global scientific literature, it wasn't clear that they would be," Houk said.

These observations were made during an expedition into the FSM atolls—a major collaboration between UOG, FSM national and state governments, National Geographic Pristine Seas, Micronesia Conservation Trust, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Waitt Institute.

Unique UOG tie with National Geographic

The collaboration marks the first relationship of its kind between UOG and the National Geographic Society, according to Houk, who served as the chief scientist for the expedition.

Click here for a National Geographic Society video of the expedition https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3TsoCOvgYZ/?igsh=NDZ3M256enM3enJk

He credited the opportunity to the development of a larger scientific network fostered through the University.

Since coming to UOG in 2013, Houk has received small-level grants to work on coral reefs and fisheries, which has been supporting his students. The students are doing great work in places like Yap, Kosrae and Saipan, each in different systems with a focus on management, Houk said.

"People started realizing, 'Hey, this is a pretty powerful network.' And we had a chance to help engage the Federated States of Micronesia."

A network involving National Geographic is a big win, Houk said.

"The amount of marine resources in FSM waters is insane ... and having UOG in and working with that and getting students in the mix on that is awesome," he said.

In addition to coral reefs, scientists are assessing deeper and open waters around the FSM atolls to get a comprehensive look at their resources.

The expedition took almost two months and ended in late November 2023. Starting from Kosrae, the expedition covered more than 2,000 miles and visited 10 to 12 atolls before reaching the end of its journey in Yap.

"The expedition is one example of the role some of our faculty play in impactful research," said UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez. "And as they take leadership roles alongside nationally recognized research institutes, in this case with National Geographic Pristine Seas and other partners on the health of corals and reef ecosystems in the Western Pacific, they bring more depth in how they teach in UOG classrooms."

With climate change well underway, one of the main goals for the expedition is to understand coral resistance to bleaching, their recovery or lack thereof, and the impact of human presence.

Those two words—"resistance" and "recovery"—combine to form "resilience," or how prepared organisms are to "fight the future," Houk said.

Another major goal is to inform resource management guidance for the outer atoll communities and management policies for FSM national government. The project is also meant to enhance the capacity of local scientists, with 12 scientists from the FSM states participating in the expedition.

Opportunities at UOG for Western Pacific region students

It was also an opportunity to tell regional students about opportunities at UOG. According to Houk, the expedition team reached out to marine science students in community colleges at each stop of their journey.

"It's one thing to hear about UOG's program, it's another thing to hear about UOG's program while you're standing on a National Geographic boat next to a submarine looking at new species of coral found in (their) waters," Houk said.

Some of his graduate students on the expedition were "getting the most rewarding experience of their lives," he added, "It's amazing."

Houk has begun incorporating information from the expedition into his lessons.

"And this will all continue," he added. ***(UOG)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS LICENSING BOARD
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
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Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on ***Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at 8 a.m.*** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (01/17/2024)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
1. Localgov Update – via ZOOM Meeting
2. FY2024 Annual Budget Call
3. Dr. Song Rhim's Monitoring Report
VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
1. Re-Appointment of Dr. Marty Rohringer and Dr. Glenda George to the HCPLBoard
B. Legislature
2. Public Hearing Schedule for Dr. Glenda George to the HCPLB – February 16, 2024, 10:00 AM
X. Old Business
1. Proposed Regulations Report (Ad Hoc Committee – Chairperson: Dr. Glenda George)
a.) Social Workers and Mental Health Counselors
2. Proposed Regulation (§ 185-10-1605(g) to Increase Delinquent License Fees for Renewal – Final Board Approval
XI. New Business
XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION TO BID
ITB24-GOV/CIP-42400049

BUILDING 1325 REPAIRS, RENOVATION AND IMPROVEMENTS

SUBMISSION DATE: 10:00 AM ChST MARCH 22, 2024

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) are soliciting sealed bids for the *"Building 1325 Repairs, Renovation and Improvements"* project in Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This project will be funded by the 702 Covenant funding under the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs.

The project package will be available in digital format only on **February 21, 2024** at the Capital Improvement Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan, during regular working hours or online at Vendor Self Service at *selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/Vendors/VBids.*

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the project site located in Capitol Hill, Saipan at **10:00 AM ChST March 7, 2024.** Bidders may request to participate via phone call or virtually five (5) days prior to the meeting scheduled. *Questions* regarding this ITB may be sumitted via email to Ms. Sunny Aldan-Salas at sunny.aldan@gov.mp no later than **4:30 PM ChST March 14, 2024.** All Questions & Answers will be shared with all prospective bidders.

Bidders located outside of the CNMI must fill out and submit the Notice of Intent to Bid Form to the Acting Director of Procurement Services via email (bidintent@dof.gov.mp) no later than **10:00 AM ChST. March 22, 2024.**

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS, AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ Arnold I. Palacios
Governor, CNMI

/S/ Brien S. Nicholas Jr., Acting Director
CNMI Procurement Services

CNMI GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SERVICES

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-DPW/TSD-42400047

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 14, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"(A) LEASE OF TWO (2) CLASS 'F' VEHICLE"
"(B) LEASE OF ONE (1) CLASS 'E' VEHICLE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, TECHINICAL SERVICES DIVISION BY MARCH 6, 2024, TO MR. KENN ALDAN VIA EMAIL AT kla@dpwtsd@gmail.com

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

US Air Force's First 'Pet a Jet' on Saipan

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Hundreds bear the mid-afternoon heat for a chance to explores the insides of two KC-135 military refueling jets operated by the 909th Air Refueling Squadron out of Kadena Air Base, which visited Saipan over the weekend in the middle of the 2024 Cope North training exercise being hosted in Guam.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Last Saturday, from 10am to 1pm, hundreds of individuals both young and old visited the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a chance to get up close and in one of the two massive KC-135 military refueling jets parked there pursuant to the ongoing Cope North 2024 exercise stationed out of Guam

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Commonwealth Ports Authority's Ports Police division as they check ID's of individuals entering the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport during the U.S Airforce's "Pet a Jet" event last Saturday.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The U.S. Air Force, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Ports Authority, hosts its first "Pet a Jet" event on Saipan last Saturday.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

People litter the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport departure field last Saturday during the U.S. Air Force's "Pet a Jet" event.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Saipan families came out to the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport last Saturday for a rare chance to see inside two KC-135 military refueling jets operated by the 909th Air Refueling Squadron out of Kadena Air Base.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The lines during the U.S Air Force's "Pet a Jet" event last Saturday stretched out for nearly a mile with people eager to explore two massive KC-135 military refueling jets parked at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport pursuant to the ongoing Cope North 2024 exercise stationed out of Guam.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 37

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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Killing a prisoner of conscience: Navalny versus Putin and his sycophants

At 47 years old, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny had spent more than a decade relentlessly fighting corruption in Russia before he died on Friday while serving a politically-motivated 19-year sentence at a penal colony. President Joe Biden is correct to blame Navalny's death on Vladimir Putin.

That Putin didn't personally push Navalny out of a window or slip him poison doesn't matter, dead is still dead as the dictator engineers another electoral victory for himself.

There's a common fallacy that to criticize something is to excuse its counterpart, and that's just not true. To say that Russia is an imperialistic neo-tsarist oligarchy with Putin as an absolute autocrat at the top is not, obviously, to say that the United States is a perfect society with flawless institutions. This is a country that once elected a failed TV businessman with little grasp of government to the presidency, and which now seems willing to consider doing so again.

Yet for all our faults, it's ridiculous for someone like far right commentator Tucker Carlson to go to Moscow and crow about Putin's great society while a political dissident wasted away on phony charges. The Russian president will of course face no consequences for Navalny's death, at least not internally, just as he has avoided any ramifications for his disastrous invasion of Ukraine, which nears two full years and has so far led only to death, destruction and suffering, not just for Ukraine's people but Putin's own.

Who's going to check him? There are no institutions left in Russia that could bring Putin to account. He's taken over the judiciary and the press, wrangling almost the whole of his country's government and industry under his direct control, allowing only symbolic opposition. He's divided the spoils among elite friends that must strive to stay in his good graces, lest they find themselves slipping out of a high window.

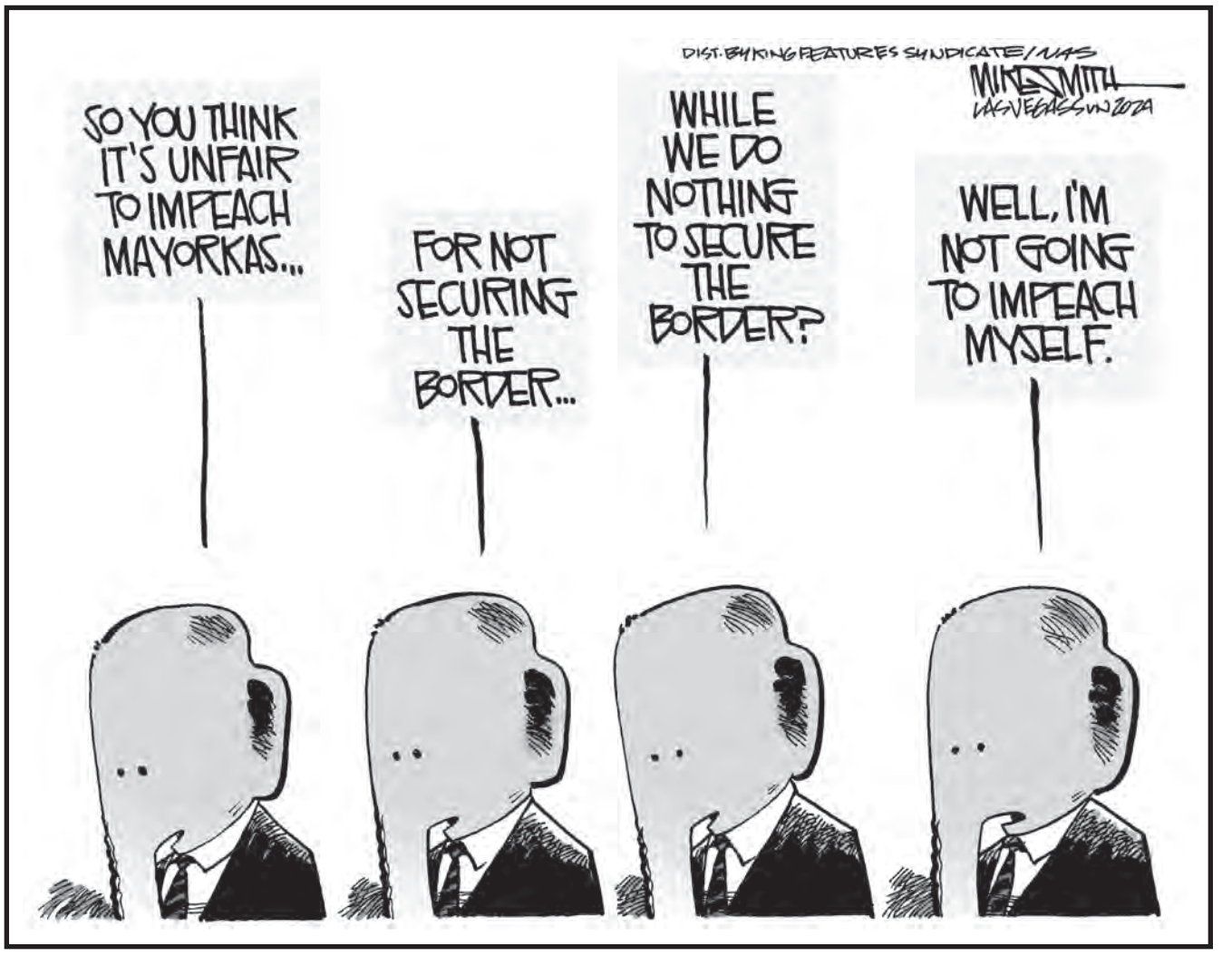
We may have had Donald Trump, but when it came down to the wire and he attempted to end American democracy, his coup failed and he was removed from power.

Navalny dreamed of another Russia, not one in which he himself stood atop an absolute political order but in which no one did, and the Russian public was able to chart its own path, free of the corruption, thuggery, cronyism and violence of the Putin regime. In this way, he was really an advocate not just for political reform but for fundamental rights, and by consequence a champion for all of us that hold such rights dear.

For this simple demand, Navalny paid the ultimate price; whatever explanation for his death is presented by the Russian authorities in the coming days, it's clear that they are ultimately responsible.

But his movement will live on, because unlike Putin's personalistic regime, the structure does not depend on just one man. As long as we don't forget about Navalny, and as long as others inside and outside Russia strive to continue his mission of hold-

See KILLING on Page 9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MIKE SMITH
LAS VEGAS NV 2024
SO YOU THINK IT'S UNFAIR TO IMPEACH MAYORKAS...
FOR NOT SECURING THE BORDER...
WHILE WE DO NOTHING TO SECURE THE BORDER?
WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO IMPEACH MYSELF.

Biden-Harris should add Navalny to the ticket

By FRANCIS WILKINSON
Bloomberg Opinion

Francis Wilkinson is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering U.S. politics and policy. Previously, he was executive editor for the* Week *and a writer for* Rolling Stone.

President Joe Biden has a new running mate. No, Vice President Kamala Harris isn't going anywhere. But Biden and Harris should make room for a third wheel on the Democratic axle this year: the heroic Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny.

Navalny was very likely murdered Friday at the behest of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin. Navalny's death, like his imprisonment on phony charges, is an outrage—but only to people who care about laws and democracy and human rights.

There was a time when the murder of a democracy activist by foreign thugs would have produced bipartisan condemnation in the U.S. But democracy, rule of law, human rights—those are not values that MAGA is eager to defend. So, Navalny's killing has powerful implications—and applications—for domestic U.S. politics.

"Putin murdered his political opponent and Trump hasn't said a word after he said he would encourage Putin to invade our allies," Nikki Haley (Trump's former UN ambassador) posted on social media Friday, hours after Navalny's death became public. Biden said there was "no doubt" Putin was responsible for Navalny's death.

Trump's silence was uncharacteristic but hardly a surprise. Only last week Trump had signaled, again, his desire to abandon NATO allies and thus speed the triumph, and expansion, of Putin's aggression. MAGA politicians in the U.S. House of Representatives are withholding funding from Ukraine, aiding the vicious Russian assault against a European nation seeking to resist 21st century fascism. The people who launched a violent attack to overthrow the U.S. republic and continue to spread lies about the 2020 election (although not so much when they are under oath) are Putin's American allies.

Meanwhile, in the moral slum of Mar-a-Lago, the MAGA gang is working to bring Russia to Washington, with plans to install MAGA hacks throughout the federal bureaucracy, " weaponize " the Justice Department against political opponents and create a red-state militia to terrorize immigrants—and surely additional targets as well. They seek to complete the transformation of the GOP into an affiliate of Putin's party, United Russia.

That's why Navalny's ghost would be such a useful addition to the U.S. presidential contest. Campaigns are about contrasts. Democracy, which is taken for granted by millions of Americans, is a difficult concept to campaign on. It's not a number, like a tax rate, or a plan, like a health-care policy. Navalny is a powerful symbol of the commitments that a democratic civilization must honor. He concisely distills democracy, just as Putin is a distillation of autocratic thuggery.

As Biden's spectral running mate, Navalny also brings Trump's shadow running mate, Putin, into the light. Trump's inability to speak ill of Putin sits atop the mountain of evidence of his devotion to the Russian dictator.

Posting about the "dissident who stood up to Putin's blood-soaked reign of murder," American evangelical refusenik Russell Moore wrote, "It requires a seared conscience to look at Russia's KGB tyranny and call it 'Christian.'"

Of course, Trump prefers consciences, like steak, burnt to a cinder. But the moral contrast between American democracy and MAGA Putinism is more difficult to obscure if Navalny remains a presence in American politics.

In the New Yorker, Masha Gessen described Navalny as "a man whose very existence seemed to make people capable of overcoming their own fears."

Trump, by contrast, is a man whose very existence depends on instilling fear— in the witnesses to his many alleged crimes, and in the spiritually and morally bankrupt ranks of MAGA, where fear of Black people, fear of immigrants, fear of LGBTQ Americans, fear of feminists, fear of books, learning, science and of reason itself makes Trump's degradation and corruption seem a safer option than reality.

Describing Navalny, Gessen wrote: "He saw the targets of his investigations as ridiculous men with large yachts, small egos, and staggeringly bad taste."

Trump, the serial fraudster convicted in civil court of sexual assault, is likewise a ridiculous man. Navalny's presence in Democratic speeches and images on the campaign trail can drive home not just Trump's Putinist corruption but his pathetic absurdity. Navalny can be an ambassador to what former AFL-CIO political director Michael Podhorzer calls the "anti-MAGA majority" of America. Navalny deserves a prime speaking role at the Democratic National Convention in August. The dead Russian is a living indictment of MAGA disgrace.

Remember 9/11? Republicans blocking Ukraine aid apparently don't

By HAL BRANDS
BLOOMBERG OPINION

Ask historians to name America's greatest foreign policy blunders, and you'll often hear a litany of misbegotten interventions—Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other wars that went awry. But some of America's biggest failures have been errors of omission rather than commission—cases in which the strategic sin was not doing too much but too little, and in which being overly cautious eventually exacted a terrible price.

Keep this in mind as America's debate on Ukraine aid reaches its climax: The Senate recently approved a new infusion of assistance, but it faces difficult odds in a fractured, Republican-led House. If Washington doesn't provide the aid that keeps Ukrainian forces fighting, the fallout will be grave and global, and it will undermine U.S. policy for years to come.

If the U.S. stops supporting Ukraine, no one else can pick up the slack. Europe can provide (and has provided) generous financial assistance, but it can't provide the warfighting equipment Ukraine desperately needs. The consequences of a cutoff would thus start to accumulate quickly. Ukrainian forces have been pressed out of Avdiivka, in the east, thanks to serious artillery shortages. Within months—or sooner—a shell-starved Ukraine would face agonizing decisions about how to deploy its dwindling military resources.

Even then, the country wouldn't collapse quickly: Russia has consistently struggled to mount large-scale offensive operations. But Ukraine would start to lose slowly, having to surrender territory that it might never get back. Certainly, a Ukraine without U.S. aid would lack any viable path to winning this war or earning a peace that leaves the country militarily defensible and economically viable. The likely outcome, eventually, would be settlement imposed at the point of Russian guns.

Some analysts believe failure will magically strengthen the U.S., by letting it turn decisively to the Indo-Pacific theater. In reality, the defeat of Ukraine would create pernicious, wide-ranging effects.

That outcome would send a terrible message, to countries everywhere, about the resolve and strength of America relative to its autocratic adversaries. It would undercut momentum toward improving America's defense industrial base, given that funding for Ukraine is mostly being used to expand production of weapons in the U.S.

A Ukrainian defeat would sow serious instability in Europe, as a vengeful, militarily mobilized Russia menaces NATO's Eastern front. It would increase global pressures for nuclear proliferation, as vulnerable countries—Poland, South Korea and Japan, to name a few—conclude that the ultimate weapon is their only means of security and, perhaps, survival. Not least, a Russian victory in Ukraine would shatter the post-1945 norm against the forcible conquest and annexation of territory, thereby pulling the world back toward vicious anarchy.

Don't buy the argument that cutting Ukraine loose would be a victory for sophisticated realism. It would be a triumph for the wing of the Republican Party that knows little and cares less about the indispensable role U.S. power has played in creating the relatively benign world America and so many other countries inhabit today. And given that the U.S. is currently preventing these dismal outcomes at a cost of just 5% to 6% of its annual defense budget—and without putting a single American soldier in combat—such a retreat would constitute one of the great unforced errors in the history of U.S. foreign policy.

If this sounds like an exaggeration, perhaps that's because many critics of American policy are more interested in errors that come from under-stretch, even though the latter can more lethal than the former. It is easy to tally the undeniable costs, in blood and treasure, of wars gone haywire in Southeast Asia or the Middle East. Entire libraries are devoted to the trouble America finds due to excessive ambition. Yet the U.S. often gets itself, and the world, in even more trouble when it doesn't lean forward enough.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the U.S. declined to use its power to stabilize the fragile, post-World War I system, and thereby helped bring on World War II. In the late 1990s, the U.S. declined to use force more aggressively against al-Qaida—a mistake that contributed to 9/11 and all the travails that followed.

Or consider the history of U.S. policy toward Ukraine itself. After Russian President Vladimir Putin seized Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine in 2014, President Barack Obama held back lethal military assistance for fear of making that conflict worse. But in doing so, he helped convince Putin that he could dismember a neighboring country without paying much of a price.

It is understandable, perhaps, that a period dominated by unsatisfying U.S. military interventions in the Middle East produced an intellectual climate in which errors of commission are endlessly catalogued while errors of omission go comparatively unremarked. If ever there was a time to shift that mindset, it is now, as Washington approaches one of its most fateful foreign policy decisions in decades.

Hal Brands is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist and the Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. Brands is also a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, the co-author of* Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China *and a member of the State Department's Foreign Affairs Policy Board. He is a senior adviser to Macro Advisory Partners.*

KILLING

From page 8

ing Putin accountable and untangling his entrenched system, the sacrifices that he made—which he never should have been forced to make—will not have been in vain.

Let's remember his resolute belief in self-determination any time a Trump or a Carlson praises Putin again.

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EMBRACING DIVERSITY

World Social Justice Day and the call for inclusive communities

By TIAVA TO'OMATA
Special to Saipan Tribune

Tiava To'omata is a projects specialist at the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.

In our journey toward fairness and equality, it is vital to remember the beautiful tapestry of humanity, including those with disabilities. As we marked the World Day of Social Justice yesterday, Feb. 20, it's a perfect time to recommit ourselves to building a world where everyone, regardless of ability, is valued, respected, and included.

The intersection of disability and social justice shines a light on the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. From inaccessible buildings to biased attitudes, many hurdles prevent them from fully participating in society. Understanding and empathy can help us break down these barriers and pave the way for a more inclusive world. Creating a society where everyone can thrive requires us to tear down walls of stigma and assumptions and build bridges of understanding and support. It means making sure that our communities are accessible to all, whether it's through ramps, Braille signs, or sign language interpreters. But it's more than just physical access; it's also about creating a culture of acceptance and celebration of diversity.

Advocacy is at the heart of social justice. Speaking up for those whose voices are often unheard and fighting for a world where everyone has equal opportunities are examples of such advocacy. Whether it's advocating for better policies, raising awareness, or simply being an ally, each of us has a role to play in creating a more just and inclusive society. At the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc., our mission is to protect and advocate for individuals with disabilities. Advocacy is our core and our action when it comes to representing our clients in cases of disability discrimination and rights violations. Advocacy exists to empower individuals and communities to advocate for their own needs and interests, building capacity, resilience, and self-determination.

As we commemorate the World Day of Social Justice, let's renew our commitment to building a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of ability. By working together, we can create a future where inclusion is not just a dream but a reality for all. The journey toward social justice is one that we must all embark on together. Let's walk hand in hand, embracing diversity, and advocating for a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. By standing up for what's right and championing inclusivity, we can create a brighter future for generations to come.

For more information on disability rights or disability discrimination, contact NMPASI at (670) 235-7273/74 or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Song Lyrics: Assassination and Murder Part 2

LITERARY NOOK
By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

Medgar Evers was an American civil rights activist and the NAACP's first field secretary in Mississippi. He was assassinated by Byron Dela Beckwith on June 12, 1963. Coincidental with Black History Month and the following song, MSNBC news show host Joy Reid has a *New York Times* bestseller book right now. Her new book is titled *Medgar and Myrlie: Medgar Evers and the Love Story that Awakened America.*

Only a Pawn in Their Game

Song by Bob Dylan in 1963

A bullet from the back of the bush took Medgar Evers' blood
A finger fired the trigger to his name, a handle hid out in the dark
A hand set the spark, two eyes took the aim, behind a man's brain
But he can't be blamed, He's only a pawn in their game.

A South politician preaches to the poor white man
"You've got more than the blacks, don't complain
You're better than them, you've been born with white skin," they explain
And the Negro's name is used it is plain for the politicians gain
as he rises to fame, and the poor white remains on the caboose of the train
But it ain't him to blame, He's only a pawn in their game.

The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers, the governors get paid,
and the marshals and cops get the same, But the poor white man's used in
the hands of them all like a tool, he's taught in his school
from the start by the rule that the laws are with him to protect his white skin,
to keep up his hate so he never thinks straight 'bout the shape that he's in
But it ain't him to blame, he's only a pawn in their game.

From the poverty shacks he looks down from the cracks to the tracks
and the hoofbeats pound in his brain, and he's taught how to walk in a pack
shoot in the back, with his fist in a clinch, to hang and to lynch
to hide 'neath a hood (*the Ku Klux Klan wear hoods—my comment*)
to kill with no pain, like a dog on a chain, he ain't got no name
But it ain't him to blame, He's only a pawn in their game.

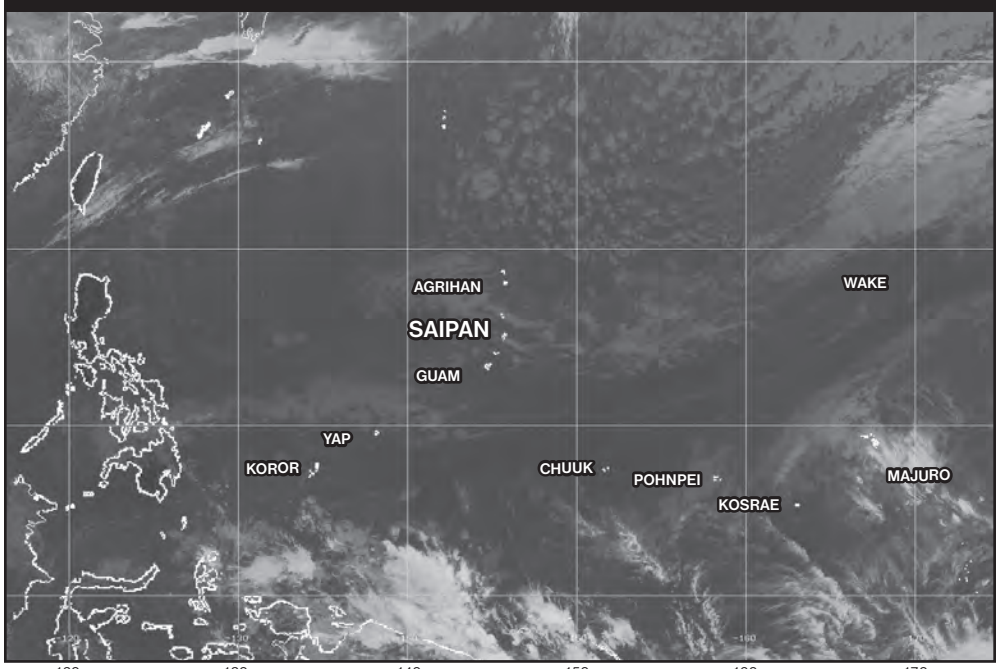
Today, Medgar Evers was buried from the bullet he caught
They lowered him down as a king, but when the shadowy sun
sets on the one that fired the gun, he'll see by his grave
on the stone that remains, carved next to his name
his epitaph plain: Only a pawn in their game.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
83 / 76°	83 / 76°	85 / 76°	86 / 77°	86 / 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:50 AM TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly sunny skies and isolated showers over the Marianas Waters this morning. The Tanapag buoy off Saipan reveals combined seas of 7 to 9 feet, composed of a variety of north and northeast swells, plus northeast wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 77°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Sunny	85° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	84° / 79°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°
Majuro	Cloudy	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:39 AM	6:22 PM
Thursday	6:38 AM	6:22 PM
Friday	6:38 AM	6:22 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	6:23 PM
Sunday	6:37 AM	6:23 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	4:18 AM	3:40 PM
Thursday	-	5:05 AM	4:33 PM
Friday	-	5:47 AM	5:24 PM
Saturday	-	6:25 AM	6:13 PM
Sunday	-	7:00 AM	7:00 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	73° / 64°
Beijing	Fair	40° / 26°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	77° / 70°
Honolulu	Showers	81° / 67°
London	Showers	48° / 37°
Los Angeles	Sunny	59° / 42°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	91° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	86° / 63°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 74°
New York	Partly Cloudy	66° / 54°
Osaka	Cloudy	63° / 59°
Paris	Showers	45° / 30°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	66° / 47°
Rome	Mostly Cloudy	52° / 37°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	79° / 63°
San Francisco	Sunny	50° / 38°
Seoul	Cloudy	51° / 37°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	72° / 59°
Washington, DC	Fair	48° / 34°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
7:24 AM	High Tide	1.59
12:38 PM	Low Tide	1.09
5:09 PM	High Tide	1.53
-	-	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

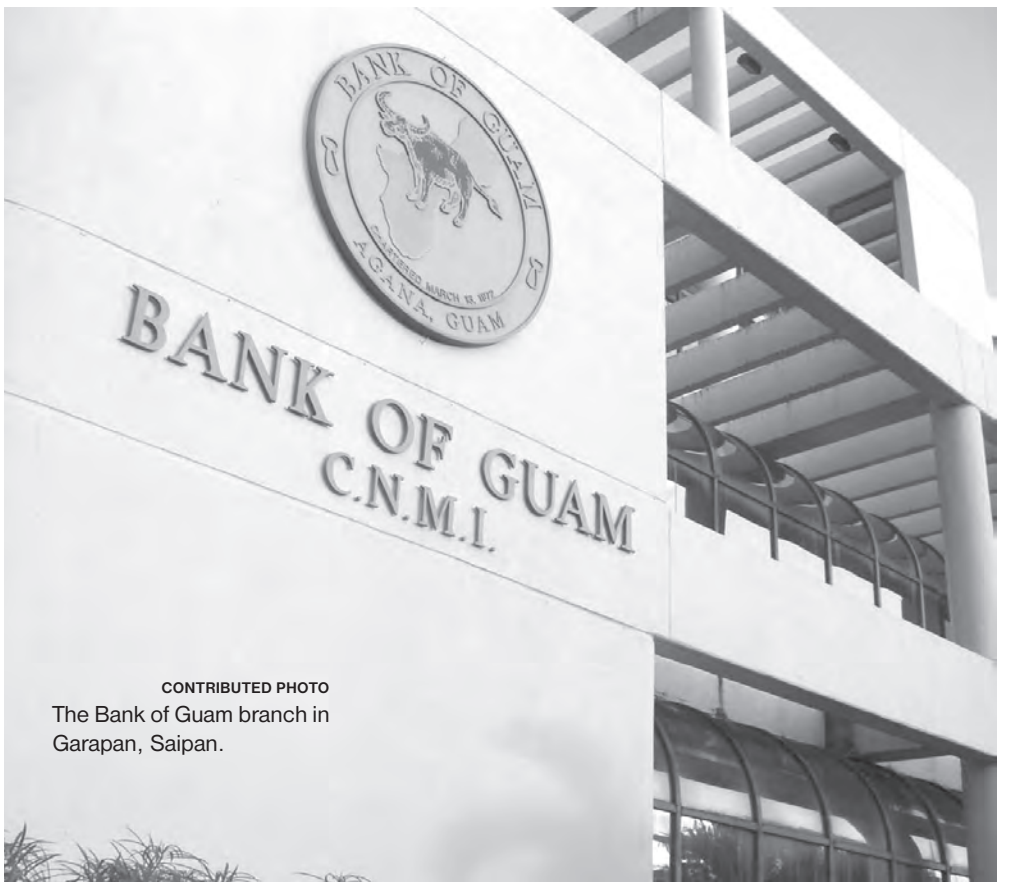
BOG launches Cannabis Banking

HAGATNA, Guam — Bank of Guam continues its trailblazing journey into 2024, announcing the launch of banking services for the cannabis industry on Guam and the Northern Marianas.

With the launch of Cannabis Banking, Bank of Guam now becomes the first local financial institution in the region to serve all tiers of Cannabis-Related Businesses, joining a growing number of banks and financial institutions across the nation including TASI Bank, a division of Bank of Guam serving the California region. TASI Bank has been engaged with the cannabis industry for over five years.

Starting this month, Bank of Guam will offer deposit and lending services to Cannabis-Related Businesses that are legally licensed on Guam and Saipan, to engage in such business activity. CRBs are any organization or business that grows, processes, dispenses, administers, or derives income from selling marijuana products. CRBs include:

■ Direct Cannabis-Related Businesses (Tier 1): Businesses licensed to directly touch the plant. Types of direct CRBs include adult use/medical use, retail, processing, cultivation, dispensaries, seed producers, testing, delivery, and consumption lounges.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Bank of Guam branch in Garapan, Saipan.

■ Indirect Cannabis-Related Businesses (Tier 2): Includes industry specific professional services. Types of indirect CRBs include operations support such as attorneys and accountants, landlords, hydroponic suppliers, packaging suppliers, delivery device suppliers, security firms, cannabis consultants, marijuana testing facilities, employment/payroll providers and cannabis software providers.

■ Hemp-Related Businesses (Tier 3): Businesses licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture or state regulatory agency to grow, test, or otherwise prepare hemp.

■ Cannabidiol Business (Tier 3): Businesses engaged in the production or sale of hemp-derived cannabinoids intended for human or animal consumption as regulated by the Food and Drug Administration.

The bank has partnered with Green Check Verified, a cannabis compliance company and leading fintech provider for compliant banking solutions. The Green Check Verified platform is completely confidential and allows Bank of Guam to meet the regulatory requirements for banking CRBs. The platform allows cannabis clients the ability to share data from their day-to-day business activities, such as sales, inventory, and required licensing documentation.

» Becomes first bank to serve all tiers of cannabis-related businesses

Additionally, the bank has adopted a comprehensive monitoring program for CRBs that satisfies the appropriate federal guidance and Bank Secrecy Act requirements and safeguards the bank's stakeholders and community. Bank of Guam's Cannabis Program consists of an initial application, ongoing account monitoring, and periodic reviews to help mitigate and reduce overall risk.

"It has always been the mission of our founder to serve the underserved and to provide access to safe and secure banking services to our communities. This now includes our Cannabis-Related Businesses. As your partner in growth, we are committed to extending our expertise as trusted financial advisors to this new industry and to allow our local Cannabis-Related Businesses who follow the process and play by the rules, a fair chance to succeed," said BOG president and chief executive officer Joaquin P. L.G. Cook.

Bank of Guam will host an open house on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, from 10am to 2pm at its Tamuning Branch. There you can connect with the Bank's dedicated team and learn how Bank of Guam can better serve the banking needs of your cannabis-related business. For those interested in attending the open house or want to learn more, please email branchRM@bankofguam.com or visit www.bankofguam.com/cannabis-banking. ***(PR)***

Capital One to buy Discover for $35B in deal that combines major US credit card companies

NEW YORK (AP)—Capital One Financial said it will buy Discover Financial Services for $35 billion, in a deal that would bring together two of the nation's credit card companies as well as potentially shake up the payments industry, which is largely dominated by Visa and Mastercard.

Under the terms of the all-stock transaction, Discover Financial shareholders will receive Capital One shares valued at nearly $140. That's a significant premium to the $110.49 that Discover shares closed at Friday.

The deal marries two of the largest credit card companies that aren't banks first, like JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup, with the notable exception of American Express. It also brings together two companies whose customers are largely similar: often Americans who are looking for cash back or modest travel rewards, compared to the premium credit cards dominated by AmEx, Citi and Chase.

"This marketplace that's dominated by the big players is going to shrink a little bit more now," said Matt Schulz, chief credit card analyst at LendingTree.

It also will give Discover's payment network a major credit card partner in a way that could make the payment network a major competitor once again. The U.S. credit card industry is dominated by the Visa-Mastercard duopoly with AmEx being a distance third place and Discover an even more distant fourth place. It's unclear whether Capitol One will adopt the Discover payment system or may set up a payment network that allows parallel use of Discover and a second payment network like Visa.

"Our acquisition of Discover is a singular opportunity to bring together two very successful companies with complementary capabilities and franchises, and to build a payments network that can compete with the largest payments networks and payments companies," said Richard Fairbank, the chairman and CEO of Capital One, in a statement.

With its purchase of Discover, Capital One is betting that Americans' will continue to increasingly use their credit cards and keep balances on those accounts to collect interest. In the fourth quarter of 2023, Americans held $1.13 trillion on their credit cards, and aggregate household debt balances increased by $212 billion, up 1.2%, according to the latest data from the New York Federal Reserve.

As they run up their card balances, consumers are also paying higher interest rates. The average interest rate on a bank credit card is roughly 21.5%, the highest it's been since the Federal Reserve started tracking the data in 1994.

Capital One has long has a business model looking for customers who will keep a balance on their cards, aiming for customers with lower credit scores than American Express or even Discover.

At the same time, the two lenders have had to boost their reserves against the possibility of rising borrower defaults. After battling inflation for more than two years, many lower- and middle-income Americans have run through their savings and are increasingly running up their credit card balances and taking on personal loans.

The additional reserves have weighed on both banks' profits. Last year, Capital One's net income available to common shareholders slumped 35% versus 2022, as its provisions for loan losses soared 78% to $10.4 billion. Discover's full-year profit sank 33.6% versus its 2022 results as its provisions for credit losses more than doubled to $6.02 billion.

Discover's customers are carrying $102 billion in balances on their credit cards, up 13% from a year earlier. Meanwhile, the charge-off rates and 30-day delinquency rates have climbed.

Beyond boosting bank deposits and loan accounts, the acquisition would give Capital One access to the Discover payment processing network. While smaller than industry giants Visa and Mastercard, the Discover network will enable Capital One to get revenue from fees charged for every merchant transaction that runs on the network.

Students and parents frustrated by delays in hearing about federal financial aid for college

NEW YORK (AP)—For many students, the excitement of being accepted into their first-choice college is being tempered this year by a troublesome uncertainty over whether they'll get the financial aid they need to attend.

The financial aid decisions that usually go out with acceptance letters are being delayed because of a later-than-expected rollout of a revised Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the form commonly known as FAFSA that schools use to compute financial aid.

The result: Students and their parents are putting off their college decisions.

"We are not going to make a decision without knowing what we're committing to financially; it would be irresponsible to do that," said Jenny Nicholas of Keene, New Hampshire. She wants to make sure that her son, a high school senior, goes to a college that is most affordable for their family.

The Education Department said the form would be easier for parents to fill out and used a new formula to compute eligibility for aid that took inflation into account. But it wasn't ready in October, when the forms for the coming school year are usually released. During a soft launch in December, it was difficult for many people to access the form. And the initial release didn't include the updated inflation tool.

Schools won't get the information they need to award financial aid until next month, forcing them to adapt. Some have moved away from the popular May 1 deadline for students to accept their offers of admission.

Just this past week, Virginia Tech, for example, said it had moved its admissions deposit deadline for first-year college students to May 15. "Understandably so, families are concerned about the FAFSA process this year, and they are telling us that they need more time to make fully informed decisions," Juan Espinoza, interim vice provost for enrollment management, said in a statement.

The school said it anticipated notifying families about financial aid in mid-April.

"We can't make a decision until we see a financial aid package," said Agata James, a mother of a New York high school senior from Queens. "Everything is in limbo."

James' son decision is torn between two colleges, one in his home state and the other an out-of-state university that is his dream school. But James says the decision will come down to what she can afford without accumulating a large amount of student loan debt.

The Education Department has said it is working to alleviate the consequences of the delays. Some of these steps taken are reducing verification requirements, sending federal experts to under-resourced schools and allocating money for technical assistance to non-profit groups.

"We are determined to get this right," Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said in a statement this month. "We must, and we will."

Nation

Biden says Navalny's death brings new urgency to need for more Ukraine aid

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden said Friday that the apparent death of Russian anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny brings new urgency to the need for Congress to approve tens of billions of dollars for Ukraine to stave off Moscow's invasion.

Speaking at the White House, Biden said that no matter the cause, he holds Russian President Vladimir Putin responsible for Navalny's death. He added, "I hope to God it helps" push U.S. lawmakers to send more aid to Ukraine.

Biden said that "history is watching" lawmakers in the House, which hasn't moved to take up a Senate-passed bill that would send funds and armaments to Ukraine, whose troops U.S. officials say are running out of critical munitions on the battlefield.

"The failure to support Ukraine at this critical moment will never be forgotten," Biden said. "And the clock is ticking. This has to happen. We have to help now."

Biden said the U.S. had not confirmed Navalny's death in a Russian prison above the Arctic Circle, but that he had no reason to doubt it either.

The president sharply criticized House Republicans for letting the chamber enter a two-week recess without moving on the Ukraine funding.

"What are they thinking—my God," Biden said. "This is bizarre and it's just reinforcing all of the concern—I won't say panic but real concern—about the United States being a responsible ally."

AP

President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden walk to board Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House, Friday, Feb. 16, 2024, in Washington, enroute to East Palestine, Ohio.

Republican Speaker Mike Johnson earlier this week said the House won't be "rushed" to pass the aid, but on Friday he said Putin was "a vicious dictator and the world knows he is likely directly responsible for the sudden death of his most prominent political opponent."

"We must be clear that Putin will be met with united opposition," Johnson, R-La., said in a statement. "As Congress debates the best path forward to support Ukraine, the United States, and our partners, must be using every means available to cut off Putin's ability to fund his unprovoked war in Ukraine and aggression against the Baltic states."

Johnson's plan for moving the aid is unclear. While the speaker has said he personally supports aiding Ukraine, he leads a far-right majority that is solidly aligned with former President Donald Trump, the front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination who opposes the legislation. Republicans have argued that Congress needs to first pass legislation to stem migration at the border, but Johnson and GOP House lawmakers immediately rejected a bipartisan Senate compromise on the border.

In a statement Friday, Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries called for an up or down vote on the Senate-passed bill.

"We must never allow Vladimir Putin and Russia to win," Jeffries said. "This is not a moment for platitudes and empty promises. It is a time to choose."

The Senate passed the Ukraine package, which also includes money for Israel and Taiwan, on a 70-29 vote Tuesday. Republicans were deeply divided on the bill, with 22 voting for it and 26 voting against. Some of the strongest GOP opponents argued that Ukraine can't win the war and that there should be a settlement with Russia, an argument Putin himself has made.

On Friday, Republicans renewed their criticism of Putin – but some suggested it was up to Biden to respond.

"Alexei Navalny died as he lived: a champion of the Russian people and a brave voice of dissent in Vladimir Putin's Russia," posted Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, who voted against the aid. "President Biden pledged 'devastating' consequences should Navalny die in prison; now he must follow through. America can't afford another erased red line."

Lawmakers who have pushed for the Ukraine legislation blamed the Republicans who have sided with Trump as he has urged its defeat.

"The Speaker's loyalty to Trump's Putin is foolish & dangerous," posted Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Democrat, on X.

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis, who voted for the package, said that Navalny laid down his life fighting for a country he loved and that "Putin is a murderous, paranoid dictator."

"History will not be kind to those in America who make apologies for Putin and praise Russian autocracy," Tillis posted. "Nor will history be kind to America's leaders who stay silent because they fear backlash from online pundits."

Stalled US aid for Ukraine underscores GOP's shift away from confronting Russia

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI
ASSOCIATED PRESS

At about 2 a.m. last Tuesday, Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin stood on the Senate floor and explained why he opposed sending more aid to help Ukraine fend off the invasion launched in 2022 by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I don't like this reality," Johnson said. "Vladimir Putin is an evil war criminal." But he quickly added: "Vladimir Putin will not lose this war."

That argument—that the Russian president cannot be stopped so there's no point in using American taxpayer dollars against him—marks a new stage in the Republican Party's growing acceptance of Russian expansionism in the age of Donald Trump.

The GOP has been softening its stance on Russia ever since Trump won the 2016 election following Russian hacking of his Democratic opponents. There are several reasons for the shift. Among them, Putin is holding himself out as an international champion of conservative Christian values and the GOP is growing increasingly skeptical of overseas entanglements. Then there's Trump's personal embrace of the Russian leader.

Now the GOP's ambivalence on Russia has stalled additional aid to Ukraine at a pivotal time in the war.

The Senate last week passed a foreign aid package that included $61 billion for Ukraine on a 70-29 vote, but Johnson was one of a majority of the Republicans to vote against the bill after their late-night stand to block it. In the Republican-controlled House, Speaker Mike Johnson said his chamber will not be "rushed" to pass the measure, even as Ukraine's military warns of dire shortages of ammunition and artillery.

Many Republicans are openly frustrated that their colleagues don't see the benefits of helping Ukraine. Putin and his allies have banked on democracies wearying of aiding Kyiv, and Putin's GOP critics warn that NATO countries in eastern Europe could become targets of an emboldened Russia that believes the U.S. won't counter it.

"Putin is losing," Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina said on the floor before Johnson's speech. "This is not a stalemate." Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky was one of 22 Republican senators to back the package, while 26 opposed it.

The divide within the party was on stark display Friday with the prison death of Russian opposition figure and anti-corruption advocate Alexei Navalny, which President Joe Biden and other world leaders blamed on Putin. Trump notably stood aside from that chorus Monday in his first public comment on the matter that referred to Navalny by name.

Offering no sympathy or attempt to affix blame, Trump posted on Truth Social that the "sudden death of Alexei Navalny has made me more and more aware of what is happening in our Country. It is a slow, steady progression, with CROOKED, Radical Left Politicians, Prosecutors, and Judges leading us down a path to destruction."

Nikki Haley, his Republican presidential primary rival, said Monday that Trump is "siding with a thug" in his embrace of Putin.

Tillis responded to Navalny's death by saying in a post, "History will not be kind to those in America who make apologies for Putin and praise Russian autocracy."

Johnson, the House speaker, issued a statement calling Putin a "vicious dictator" and pledging that he "will be met with united opposition," but he did not offer any way forward for passing the aid to Ukraine.

Minnesota man who shot two officers, firefighter wasn't allowed to have guns

A man who died after fatally shooting two police officers and a firefighter in a wooded Minneapolis-area neighborhood wasn't legally allowed to have guns after a previous assault conviction and was entangled in a yearslong dispute over the custody and financial support of his three oldest children, court records show.

Authorities on Monday identified Shannon Gooden, 38, as the man who opened fire on police in the affluent suburb of Burnsville after they responded to a domestic disturbance call early Sunday. The unidentified caller reported that Gooden had barricaded himself in his home with family members, including seven children aged 2 to 15. He was found dead inside the home hours later.

Authorities said Gooden killed Officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, both 27, and Adam Finseth, 40, a firefighter and paramedic who was assigned to the city's SWAT team. Another officer, Sgt. Adam Medlicott, was shot and wounded.

Gooden's standoff with police came only two days before a scheduled district court hearing over his ongoing legal disputes with the mother of his three oldest children. The attorney representing Gooden in that dispute, Robert Manson, did not return a telephone message seeking comment. There was no answer Monday evening at a phone listing for a woman described in court records as Gooden's girlfriend.

Court records show the state barred Gooden from possessing guns after he pleaded guilty in 2008, aged 22, to second-degree assault with a dangerous weapon. Prosecutors said he threw rocks and pulled a knife on a man in a Burnsville shopping mall parking lot.

Authorities have not provided details about Sunday's call that led police to Gooden's home, and it's not clear exactly how he died. But court records suggest he cared for seven children — the three oldest by one woman, two more with another and that woman's two children from a previous relationship.

Court records also show his disputes over the parenting of his oldest three children had grown increasingly contentious. He accused their mother, Noemi Torres, of neglect and she called him "controlling" and accused him of abusing her and the children. ***(AP)***

World

More than 29K Palestinians killed in Israel-Hamas war

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israel's assault in Gaza has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7, the territory's Health Ministry said Monday, marking another grim milestone in one of the deadliest and most destructive military campaigns in recent history.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" against Hamas after the militants' Oct. 7 attack on Israeli communities. He and the military have said troops will move soon into the southernmost town of Rafah on the Egyptian border, where over half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

The United States, Israel's top ally, says it is still working with mediators Egypt and Qatar to try to broker another cease-fire and hostage release agreement. But those efforts appear to have stalled in recent days, and Netanyahu angered Qatar by calling on it to pressure Hamas and suggesting it funds the militant group.

The conflict has also brought near daily exchanges of fire between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group that frequently threaten to escalate.

Israeli warplanes on Monday carried out at least two strikes near the southern port city of Sidon in one of the largest attacks near a major city, wounding 14 people, Lebanese state media said. The Israeli military said it attacked Hezbollah arms depots near Sidon in retaliation for a drone that exploded in an open field near the northern Israeli city of Tiberias earlier Monday.

In Gaza, the Health Ministry said the death toll had risen to 29,092 since the start of the war, around two-thirds of them women and children. More than 69,000 Palestinians have been wounded, overwhelming the territory's hospitals, less than half of which are even partially functioning. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel from Gaza on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 men, women and children hostage. After a round of exchanges for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel in November, around 130 remain captive, a fourth of them believed to be dead.

The Israeli military released a video Monday showing what is believed to be the youngest hostage, his brother and mother being led through the streets of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis soon after their kidnapping on Oct. 7.

The video provides evidence that Shiri Bibas and her two young boys, Ariel, 4, and Kfir, who was 9 months old at the time, survived the initial kidnapping. The boys are the only children who remain in captivity, along with their mother.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the military's chief spokesman, said the army is "very concerned" about the family's wellbeing. He said the army found the videos in security cameras seized during its offensive in Khan Younis.

The video appears to show Bibas, wrapped in a blanket, being led through a dirt street by her captors as she carries Ariel. The military said it believed that Kfir was in a baby sling and could not be seen under the blanket.

The infant with red hair and a toothless smile has become a symbol across Israel for the helplessness and anger over the hostages still held in Gaza. Their father, Yarden Bibas, is also still in captivity.

In a statement, the extended Bibas family said the videos "tear our hearts out." They made a desperate plea for negotiations to release all of the hostages. In January, the family and hundreds of activists marked Kfir's first birthday in what his family called "the saddest birthday party in the world."

With thousands of Palestinians detained by Israel since the war began, an Israeli human rights group reported that Palestinians inside Israeli prisons face daily violence from guards, who enter cells and beat inmates with batons, kicks and fists without provocation in abuse it said could amount to torture. Physicians for Human Rights—Israel said in a report Monday that detainees reported guards urinating on them and forcing them to kiss the Israeli flag and to strip. Prisoners are also held in overcrowded cells and deprived of water for long periods, it said.

Japan vows support to Ukraine

TOKYO (AP)—Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has pledged Monday his country's long-term commitment to Ukraine's reconstruction, calling it a future investment, while stressing support for the war-torn country about to mark the second anniversary of Russia's invasion.

In his keynote speech at The Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction, Kishida said Japanese public and private cooperation will be a long-term partnership based on inclusivity, humanitarianism as well as technology and knowledge.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, who led his country's delegation of more than 100 people, thanked Kishida and said that "today is the new start of cooperation between the two countries."

The conference was organized by the Japanese and Ukrainian governments as well as business organizations and Japan External Trade Organization. About 300 people and 130 companies from the two sides were in attendance, according to Japanese officials.

Kishida stressed the importance of investment across industries for the future of Ukraine's development in a way that caters to its needs. Japanese and Ukrainian government agencies and companies signed more than 50 deals, vowing cooperation.

Kishida also announced the opening of a new government trade office in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

Moreover, Japan pledged 15.8 billion yen ($105 million) in new aid for Ukraine to fund demining and other urgently needed reconstruction projects in the energy and transportation sectors, the Foreign Ministry said.

Support for Ukraine's reconstruction is about "investing in the future," Kishida said. "The war in Ukraine is still going on at this very moment and the situation is not easy. The promotion of economic reconstruction, however, is not only an investment for the future of Ukraine," but also an investment for Japan and the world, he said.

ASIAN BRIEFS

PH troops clash with Muslim militants in gunbattle that left at least 8 dead

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines (AP)—Philippine troops clashed with Muslim militants in a gunbattle that left at least six soldiers and two rebels dead in a fog-shrouded hinterland in the south, military officials said Monday. Military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said four other soldiers were wounded in the army offensive Sunday against fighters of the Dawlah Islamiyah, a small armed group aligned with the Islamic State group, near Munai town in Lanao del Norte province. Troops were hunting a still-unknown number of militants, who withdrew from the scene of the battle, military officials said. Brawner vowed to get justice for the slain and wounded soldiers. "I assure their families and every Filipino that justice will be meted and all efforts will be exhausted in pursuit of the enemy," Brawner said in a statement where he expressed condolences to the families of the soldiers. "Our troops are motivated to finish the job and accomplish our mission of defeating local terrorist groups once and for all," he said. The military has killed 18 fighters of the Dawlah Islamiyah, reportedly including its leader, in a series of military offensives after the group was blamed for a Dec. 3 bombing that left four people dead and 50 others wounded while attending a Catholic Mass at the Mindanao State University in southern Marawi city.

Landslide in eastern Afghanistan leaves at least 5 people dead and 25 missing, Taliban official says

ISLAMABAD (AP)—A landslide triggered by heavy rain and snowfall buried more than two dozen houses in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least five people and leaving more than 20 others missing, a provincial official said Monday. The landslide Sunday night destroyed or damaged more than two dozen houses in Noorgram district, according to Samiulhaq Haqbayan, the Taliban-appointed director of information and culture in Nuristan province. Rescuers have recovered five bodies and were searching for at least 25 others trapped under the destroyed houses, Haqbayan said. The heavy rains and snowfall were continuing, he added. Nuristan province, which borders Pakistan, is mostly covered by mountainous forests.

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Good Housekeeping

The new mauve and black

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service

Anyone over the age of 45 will likely remember the "it" colors of the 1980s. But just in case you have forgotten, the color combination was black and mauve. Essentially black paired with a dusty rose shade of pink. Then the color combination became "dated."

Now black and mauve or deep charcoal/black and soft pinks are back in style. Why? Pastel colors remain in, from soft yellow to powder blue and even mint green and pink is part of this trend. Further, those looking for a contrast color to pair with the harshness of a dark charcoal or black, find a sense of freshness when as space is infused with some hints of pink. When looking for ideas, here are some trends and tips to keep you on the right path.

Look to include "portable design" (items you can take with you and move from room to room or home to home) such as toss pillows and throws.

HANDOUT/TNS

A "pop of pink" adds an unexpected contrast element in this living space.

Curate select pieces of art that can include both the colors black and mauve in a single piece.

Try using black as your larger pieces such as upholstery and mauve for accents.

Experiment with this color combination in various rooms of a home, for example in a living space. Pink doesn't have to be used in just bedrooms.

Consider the color black for soft goods such as throws, pillows and even items such as rugs, these pieces will last for years to come and can be paired with various colors.

Use multiple items of each color throughout a space, which is a technique called "color mapping" in order to help a space feel cohesive.

Look for interesting ways to infuse color into a space such as with blooms and accessories.

Need a start for your color story? Try finding an inspirational piece that includes both black and mauve as your "inspiration" piece.

Experiment with adding mirrors to a space as this will help to reflect both light and color.

Consider adding greenery to your space. The color green will add an unexpected "pop of color" when paired with black and mauve.

HANDOUT/TNS

Pink accessories mixed in with black and dark gray adds a soothing calm to this master bedroom.

HANDOUT/TNS

Mauve accented artwork as well as black and mauve accessories highlight moldings that include mauve accents.

HANDOUT/TNS

Black and mauve take center stage in this elegant living space.

HANDOUT/TNS

A repetition of black and mauve helps to make the color combination feel cohesive.

Should I get an electrical inspection?

By PAUL F. P. POGUE
Ask Angi

Electricity is one of those things in your home you probably don't think about maintaining until something goes wrong. And indeed, with no moving parts, the electrical infrastructure of your home can go years without problems. But any system wears out, especially one with a lot of heat and energy traveling through it, and as the years pass, you may notice more problems with outlets and circuit breakers.

Maintaining electrical outlets and switches is both preventative maintenance and a critical aspect of home safety. That's why regular inspections and addressing issues with outlets and switches prevent electrical hazards, potential fires and ensure the reliable functioning of the electrical system. The holidays tend to put a lot of strain on the system, so this is a good time of year to get a checkup.

If your switches, outlets, and lighting are not operating as you would expect or are behaving differently than they have, an electrician can tell you if repair or if replacement is appropriate. It is safest to address any potential electrical work immediately, but if you have any repairs you've put off, take the time to address them now.

A professional hired for electrical inspections will examine outlets and switches for signs of wear, damage or safety hazards. They'll assess wiring, connections and overall functionality to ensure compliance with safety standards and make sure they're in line with the National Electrical Code. You'd be surprised how much pre-existing work wasn't done up to code standards, especially in older homes.

A full electrical system inspection will cost around $150, depending on home size. For individual specific problems that come up, your electrician will likely charge their hourly rate.

An electrician generally checks that the system is using the correct gauge of wire to handle intended loads on specific circuits; that cables and wires are installed securely and correctly; that GFCI and AFCI breakers are working as intended; that all outlets and switches are at a safe height; and that wires are labeled correctly.

Do I need an inspection?

Signs indicating the need for attention to outlets and switches include sparking, flickering lights, outlets not holding plugs securely, discoloration or signs of overheating. In any of those cases, have a professional check it out sooner rather than later. Energy bills rising suddenly for no apparent reason can also give away a potential problem. Consider a preventative maintenance inspection every three to five years. If your home is more than 25 years old, get the electrical system inspected every two to three years. The older the home, the more liable the system is to breaking down.

Hire licensed electricians or electrical contractors experienced in inspecting and repairing electrical systems, including outlets and switches. Licensing requirements vary by location, but ensure they're qualified and insured. Investing in a comprehensive inspection by a reputable electrician is crucial for safety, so consider this as a necessary expense.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Life & Style

'OUR GODS WERE LOCKED IN THE BASEMENT.'

Nepal now pursuing sacred items once smuggled abroad

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP)—Nepal's gods and goddess are returning home.

An unknown number of sacred statues of Hindu deities were stolen and smuggled abroad in the past. Now dozens are being repatriated to the Himalayan nation, part of a growing global effort to return such items to countries in Asia, Africa and elsewhere.

Last month, four idols and masks of Hindu gods were returned to Nepal from the United States by museums and a private collector.

Among them was a 16th century statue of Uma-Maheswora, an avatar of the gods Shiva and Parvati, that was stolen four decades ago. It was not clear who took it or how it ended up at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, which handed it over to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office.

AP

Masks of Hindu deity Lord Bhairabh dated from 16th century that was stolen from Dolakha district is brought back from Dallas museum of art and Rubin Museum of art is displayed during a press conference at the Department of Archaeology in Kathmandu, Nepal, Jan. 31, 2024.

Devotees celebrated its return in Patan, south of the capital, Kathmandu. The stone-paved alleys were crowded with devotees offering money and flowers. Men in traditional attire played drums and cymbals and chanted prayers.

"I cannot say how extremely happy I am right now," said Ram Maya Benjankar, a 52-year-old who said she had cried as a child after learning the statue had been stolen and waited years for its return.

The statue had simply disappeared from their neighborhood, she said.

The majority of Nepal's 29 million people are Hindu, and every neighborhood has a temple that houses such items. They are rarely guarded, making it easy for thieves.

For Nepalese, the idols have religious significance but no monetary value. For smugglers, however, they can bring huge value abroad. For years, there was little attention given to the thefts or any effort made at recovery.

That has changed in recent years as the government, art lovers and campaigners pursue stolen heritage items. They have been successful in many cases.

A group representing the ethnic Newar community from Nepal in the U.S. heard about the reappearance of the Uma-Maheswora statue at the Brooklyn Museum and took the initiative to bring it home.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Former CBS executive Les Moonves to pay Los Angeles ethics fine for interference in police probe

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Former CBS chief executive and president Les Moonves has agreed to pay a $11,250 fine to settle a complaint accusing him of interfering with a police investigation of a sexual assault case, according to documents released Friday by the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission. According to the documents, Moonves acknowledged working closely with then-Capt. Cory Palka of the Los Angeles Police Department in 2017 to obtain information about a sexual assault victim's confidential police report against him. Palka, who had provided private security for Moonves between 2008 and 2014 at the Grammy Awards, which CBS produced, notified network officials about the complaint against the executive in November 2017, the documents show. Through Palka, they say, Moonves obtained an unredacted copy of the police report, which also included personal information such as the home address and phone number of the accuser. Moonves also met with Palka for an hour at a restaurant to discuss the complaint and ways to quash it. Moonves was accused of three violations of city rules.

The Rock, Pitbull, DJ Khaled bring South Florida flavor to Daytona 500

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)—The 3-0-5 took over the Daytona 5-0-0. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Pitbull and DJ Khaled represented South Florida at the Daytona 500, as the trio of Sunshine State celebrities brought a dose of star power to Sunday's scheduled race day that was washed out by rain. Johnson, the wrestler/actor, said he would stay for Monday's rescheduled race and honor his role as Daytona 500 grand marshal and give the command for drivers to start their engines. Pitbull was scheduled to perform the pre-race concert in the Daytona infield, but it was scrapped because of steady rain. He agreed to return in 2025 for the same event. Khaled said he unable to stay Monday for his role as honorary starter. The last time the Daytona 500 was postponed a full day was in 2012.

AP wins the best-documentary prize at the BAFTA awards for Ukraine film '20 Days in Mariupol'

LONDON (AP)—The Associated Press won the best documentary prize at the British Academy Film Awards for Ukraine war documentary "20 Days in Mariupol," produced with PBS' "Frontline." Filmmaker Mstyslav Chernov admitted the accolade made him feel conflicted. "It's a huge honor. It's a huge responsibility," the Ukrainian journalist said after winning the trophy Sunday at London's Royal Festival Hall. "This is not about us. This is about Ukraine and about the people of Mariupol." Chernov and an AP team spent three weeks in the Ukrainian port city as it was besieged by Russian forces in early 2022, documenting at huge personal risk the devastating toll on civilian and capturing enduring images of the war.

Naomi Campbell walks for star-studded Burberry show at London Fashion Week

LONDON (AP)—For Londoners, rain is simply a fact of life. But for Burberry, it's the inspiration for seemingly endless variations of luxurious outerwear, from the heritage brand's best-selling trench coat to oversized duffels and fur-lined bombers. The British fashion house showcased its latest designs Monday at London Fashion Week to a soulful Amy Winehouse soundtrack interspersed with a woman's voice saying "I love London ... the smell of London when it rains." "Saltburn" star Barry Keoghan and "The Crown" actress Olivia Coleman were among celebrities who turned up on the VIP front row to watch the show, which drew heavily on the heritage house's military history and its signature check print. Models wore double-breasted coats buttoned all the way up to the neck, as if bracing against the inclement British weather. Some donned mannish, oversized coats in military greens and browns paired with matching wide-leg trousers, while others covered up with an elegant silk scarf wrapped around the head.

Father weighs revealing partner's health status

DEAR ABBY: I am a gay man who came out late in life. I have three grown, married children and five grandchildren. They are my world, and we are all very close. I've had one partner. My family readily accepted and welcomed him because he made me happy. Unfortunately, it didn't work out.

I have been seeing another person, and our connection is very strong. We have lots in common. I think I'm falling in love, and I envision a future with him. He is HIV-positive. I am on PrEP, or preexposure prophylaxis, the most effective medication to prevent contracting HIV. We have not been intimate, but I'm aware of all the literature about the extremely low risk of transmission.

My kids are bright, intelligent and "enlightened." I wonder if I should tell them about my boyfriend being positive. A part of me says that's his truth and he should tell them if he feels compelled. I will not reveal it without his approval. Another part of me says it's not my children's business because it applies only to intimate situations. But I've always been completely upfront with my kids about practically everything.

So now I'm torn about what to do—tell them (or he tells them) and risk getting a negative reaction, or I keep it a secret, no matter how uncomfortable that is for me. Please advise.

HOW HONEST IN THE EAST

DEAR HOW HONEST: If there were a compelling reason for your adult children to know your friend's HIV status, I would urge you to tell them. However, because none of them are likely to have sex with this person, I see no reason to share that information.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have one sister I love. Our parents passed away 12 years ago. We don't have a good relationship, although I try. Recently, we have been texting again.

Her son is being married in a few months. I have three children. My 26-year-old has been in trouble a lot and caused my sister's family hurt. He's not going to the wedding. My other boys are younger, 18 and 21. They have never been in trouble.

I have maintained somewhat of a relationship with my nephew. He has only three cousins on his mom's side. There are at least 17 cousins on his dad's side. Many of them have spouses, and they are all invited. My younger sons are not. Because I am deeply hurt, I have decided not to attend. My nephew's excuse for not inviting my sons was that "attendance is tight."

Am I wrong for not going? I can't help but think my sister and (all but one) of her kids don't want a relationship with my family. Should I let it go or continue pursuing a relationship when it seems obvious the feeling is not reciprocated?

DEEPLY HURT IN TEXAS

DEAR DEEPLY HURT: It's a shame that your two law-abiding sons are being tarred with the same brush as the one who is a black sheep. They do not deserve it. However, I caution you against overreacting by boycotting the wedding. If you attend, it will give you an opportunity to tighten family ties and to talk about how proud you are of your two younger sons, who are on the straight and narrow.

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

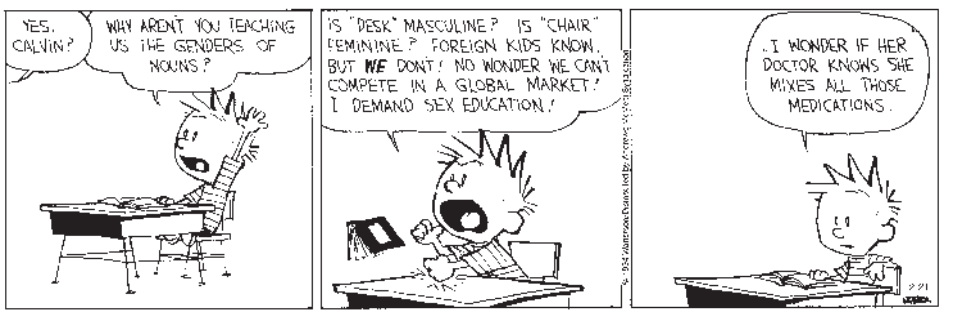
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

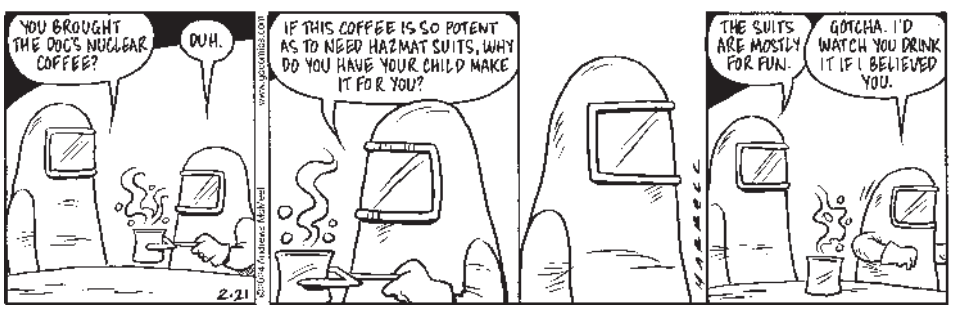

YES, CALVIN?
WHY AREN'T YOU TEACHING US THE GENDERS OF NOUNS?
IS "DESK" MASCULINE? IS "CHAIR" FEMININE? FOREIGN KIDS KNOW, BUT WE DON'T! NO WONDER WE CAN'T COMPETE IN A GLOBAL MARKET! I DEMAND SEX EDUCATION!
I WONDER IF HER DOCTOR KNOWS SHE MIXES ALL THOSE MEDICATIONS.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


YOU BROUGHT THE DOG'S NUCLEAR COFFEE?
DUH.
IF THIS COFFEE IS SO POTENT AS TO NEED HAZMAT SUITS, WHY DO YOU HAVE YOUR CHILD MAKE IT FOR YOU?
THE SUITS ARE MOSTLY FOR FUN.
GOTCHA. I'D WATCH YOU DRINK IT IF I BELIEVED YOU.
2-21

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I DECIDED TO WORK ON MY ABS.
I JUST DID A SITUP. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WOW, WHAT A DEFINED 6-PACK YOU HAVE.
UH, YOU'RE NOT BEING SARCASTIC, ARE YOU?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Clothing protector
4 NASCAR adver-tiser
7 Chianti, for one
8 Backed (away from)
10 Cate-gory
11 Body art
13 Super-helpful
16 6 on a phone
17 Soprano Fleming
18 Belfry critter
19 Sand formation
20 — -Seltzer
21 Planet circlers
23 Jason's wife
25 Diplo-macy
26 Turns sharply
27 Gallery display
28 Conduc-tor Solti
30 Cover
33 Pecorino Romano, for one
36 Willowy
37 Scho-lastic hurdles
38 Leers at
39 Church section
40 Lith., once
41 Homer's cry

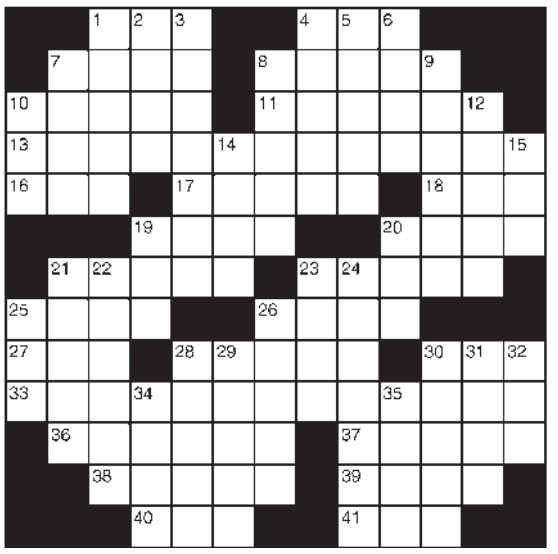
DOWN

1 "That's it!"
2 Con-cerning
3 Quick trip for a six-pack
4 Form
5 Bestseller list entry
6 Base-ball's Rose
7 Withdraw gradually
8 14 pounds
9 Within one's powers
10 Tiara sparkler
12 Tennis great Naomi
14 Saw-bucks
15 JFK info
19 Speck
20 Bill-boards
21 Shopping centers
22 Book size
23 Artist Chagall
24 Brainiac
25 — chi
26 Regions
28 Fish organs
29 Chow hound
30 Tether
31 "Woe —!"
32 — Moines
34 Piano supports
35 Big fair, for short

Solution time: 23 mins.

G	O	B	I		S	K	I		M	A	C	H		
O	V	E	N		E	E	L		A	C	A	I		
L	E	N	D		D	R	E	N	C	H	E	D		
D	R	E	I	S	E	R		I	R	E	N	E		
			G	A	R		J	L	O					
X	E	R	O	X		D	I	E	S	S	E	S		
E	R	A			E	O	S			T	R	I		
D	R	E	S	D	E	N		E	A	S	E	D		
			I	R	K		A	W	L					
M	A	T	T	E		D	R	C	A	M	E	R		
D	R	E	A	D	F	U	L		S	O	R	E		
V	F	F	R		A	P	F		K	O	T	O		
I	A	M	S		D	F	S		A	G	F	S		

Yesterday's answer 2-21



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Elliot Page, 37; Jennifer Love Hewitt, 45; William Baldwin, 61; Kelsey Grammer, 69.

Happy Birthday: Organize, simplify and return to what matters most. Take care of unfinished business, and ease stress. It's time to live in the moment and congregate with people you love. Challenge yourself to use your skills creatively and to reflect and revisit goals you have yet to conquer. Do what you love and love what you do, and enjoy the outcome. Your numbers are 2, 14, 21, 26, 29, 36, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: You'll make gains if you are forward-thinking and ready to act. Let your instincts guide you and keep your emotions in check. Look for solutions that are easy to initiate. Embrace what you do best, love who you are and prioritize personal growth. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Protect your reputation, position and home. Refuse to let anyone barge in and take over. Keep your life and plans simple, doable and within budget. Show discipline when temptation kicks in, and don't be afraid to break away from the crowd and do your own thing. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Live and learn. Let experience guide you. What you choose to do will make a statement that reveals if you are a target for scammers or a savvy intellect who can fend for themselves. Personal growth and romance are favored. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Keep emotional spending to a minimum. You'll have a more significant impact if you look for cost-effective options and suggestions that assist others in helping themselves. Branch out, and don't be afraid to take the road less traveled. Embrace what brings you joy. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Emotions will surface if you let the changes others make affect your plans. Rise above what others do or say and push forward. Let your actions speak for you, and peace of mind will follow. Don't take risks with your money, health or emotional well-being. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: A change will spark your imagination and offer a different perspective on what's best and next for you. Don't let outside interference lead to doubt. Trust and believe in yourself and your ability to learn. Take responsibility for your happiness. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Protect your position and status. Refuse to let poor behavior or lofty plans rob you of maintaining financial and emotional security. Stick close to home and nurture what's important to you. Hone your skills and push to advance. Make home improvements and love your priorities. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Contemplate what you can achieve and follow through. Wasting time on dead-end projects won't satisfy your soul. A change is apparent, but first, put a plan in place and act. Choose to be the master of your destiny. Let go of the past and excel. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Pay attention to detail, listen and observe, and refrain from changing course for the wrong reason. Evaluate your status and manage your expenses. Offer hands-on help, not cash. You can't buy love. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Show your appreciation by doing something nice for someone you love; your response will be out of the ordinary. Don't let change upset your vision or cost you physically or financially. What you accomplish will far exceed your expectations. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Keep tabs on what you spend and the promises you make. Refrain from revealing personal information and secrets or signing up for subscriptions. Don't let the changes others make ruin your plans. If someone bails on you, regroup and keep marching forward. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Invest in yourself and your dreams. Review your qualifications and how you utilize the skills you enjoy using most. Consider what's trending and how to market what you can offer. Reset your goals and put a plan and timeline in place. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are resourceful, steady and disciplined. You are motivated and thoughtful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1	7		6					
		2				7	4	
3	9		4	7				5
	4	1	8		6			
	3	9			4		2	6
8				3			9	
		6	9				3	4
	1	3			8	2		
	2			4			1	

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/21

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	8	7	4	9	2	6	5	3
6	2	4	5	3	7	8	9	1
5	3	9	1	8	6	4	2	7
4	5	2	3	7	9	1	8	6
8	7	1	6	2	4	9	3	5
3	9	6	8	5	1	7	4	2
2	1	3	7	4	8	5	6	9
9	6	8	2	1	5	3	7	4
7	4	5	9	6	3	2	1	8

Difficulty: ★★ 2/20

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

PRODUCT MONOGRAPHS **Solution: 8 letters**

P	H	A	R	M	A	C	Y	P	A	R	E	H	T	L
I	E	N	I	C	I	D	E	M	D	R	O	P	S	A
L	A	L	A	C	I	M	E	H	C	S	R	A	P	B
L	L	N	U	S	A	G	E	T	P	O	F	P	E	O
S	T	O	C	S	I	Z	E	I	D	E	R	T	F	R
N	H	I	R	E	P	K	T	U	T	O	U	M	F	A
O	N	T	E	M	R	A	C	Y	V	O	E	I	E	T
I	O	I	A	A	L	T	C	A	R	D	R	A	C	O
T	I	D	M	N	R	N	L	Y	I	Ⓐ	E	L	T	R
U	T	N	S	A	A	W	D	C	R	T	Ⓣ	C	E	Y
A	C	O	H	N	E	A	A	N	A	I	I	Ⓐ	R	F
C	A	C	G	I	T	L	E	B	A	L	P	M	Ⓓ	A
E	E	E	V	E	N	E	T	T	I	R	W	X	E	C
R	R	E	T	A	L	P	M	E	T	A	B	L	E	T
P	R	E	S	C	R	I	P	T	I	O	N	C	H	S

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Yesterday's Answer: Cleanse

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NBA's scoring boom still going strong, some wonder if that's a good thing

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—There was a week in January unlike almost any other in NBA history. Joel Embiid scored 70 and Karl-Anthony Towns scored 62 one night, followed four days later by Luka Doncic scoring 73 and Devin Booker scoring 62.

That's four 60-point games in five days—something the league hadn't seen since 1962. There had been entire decades where the NBA didn't see that many 60-point outings by players.

"That's just where the state of the league is right now," said the Los Angeles Lakers' Anthony Davis, one of the top contenders this season for defensive player of the year.

Defense wasn't really played in the All-Star Game, which explains why the Eastern Conference scored a record 211 points and the game saw nearly 400 points combined on Sunday night. Points couldn't have been easier to come by.

Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic (77) get a basket on a dunk during the second half of an NBA All-Star basketball game in Indianapolis, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024.

But in the regular season—although some might dispute this—defense does get played. And points just keep piling up anyway with the NBA on pace to see its highest-scoring season in more than 50 years with teams averaging more than 115 points per game, up about 1% from last year and up a staggering 15.5% from where it was a decade ago.

"It makes the layperson look back and say, what's going on? In one year, did they get that much better or is it harder to defend or are they not playing defense?" Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers said. "And I can tell you the guys are playing defense. But it is harder to defend with the rules."

Rivers, Minnesota coach Chris Finch and others in the league expect that the NBA will try to help defenses next season by allowing them to do a little bit more. It has been discussed at the league level. What that means, nobody really knows for certain.

But many of the rule tweaks in recent years—giving offensive players more freedom of movement is the one most players cite—seem to have made the task of scoring a bit easier.

"I hate to say it," Cleveland guard Donovan Mitchell said, "but we're really good at what we do."

Boston's Jaylen Brown said part of the problem is with how the media and others talk about the game. In his view, offense is all that anybody seems to tout.

"It kind of seems like it's hard to guard anybody these days," Brown said. "That's why I give such respect to the ones who are committed to that side of the ball, because right now we just pay attention to the ones who can score the ball. Those are the ones who are considered our best players. We completely ignore defense like it's not even a part of how good a player is."

Commissioner Adam Silver doesn't see it that way. He and other NBA executives have insisted that the league wants competitive games and hasn't prioritized huge offensive numbers.

Silver said that's the feedback the league gets from fans as well.

"I think there's a lot happening here, and I've talked to a lot of coaches and a lot of players about it. I think, first of all, the skill level is off the charts," Silver said. "I think what we're seeing is now in this league, every player at every position has to be able to shoot the basketball. You're seeing this global pool of talent coming into the league, some of the best athletes in the world, who can, frankly, just shoot the lights out."

The 3-point craze in the NBA has been going on for years, and the league is on pace to break the record for both 3s made in a season — and 3-point accuracy as well. That doesn't mean the great scorers are only the ones who can hit from deep; Embiid was averaging 35.3 points and running away with the scoring title yet again when he got hurt.

He was averaging just over one made 3-pointer per game. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Giannis Antetokounmpo are two of the other three players averaging 30 points this season and neither of them are 3-point savants, either. Doncic is the other player averaging at least 30; he makes nearly four 3s per game.

"We can really see the shifts the past years, decades, in the game," San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama said. "I think physical bigs are going to be more and more dominant in the game."

Big nights are happening every night, or so it seems. Last season saw 203 instances—a league record, by far—of players scoring 40 points in a game. This season is on pace to see 179 such games, which would be the second-most in NBA history.

This season has even seen six instances of 60-point games. That's the third-most from any season in NBA history; the other two seasons were 1961-62 and 1962-63 when there were a combined 26 games of 60 or more—24 of them from Wilt Chamberlain alone.

Booker was 20 when he scored 70 points in a game. He did it for Phoenix on March 24, 2017—and it was one of only four games of 70 or more in a span of nearly 50 years. The only others in that span: Kobe Bryant scored 81 in 2006, David Robinson scored 71 in 1994 and David Thompson scored 73 in 1978.

It's happened four times in the last 14 months. Mitchell and Damian Lillard each had 71-point games in 2023, Embiid and Doncic did it last month.

"It was harder to get 70 back in my day, man. Now everybody gets it," Booker said, laughing. "This is crazy, man. People are scoring the ball at a high level. The talent's at an all-time high. You know the evolution of the game. People just keep getting better and better—80, 90, yeah, 100 is possible."

No player has seen the scoring level change as much as the Lakers' LeBron James. When he was a rookie, the NBA average per team was 93.4 points per game.

This season, there have been 483 instances of teams scoring 93 points—by the end of the third quarter.

"You've got so many great talents in this league," James said. "Would I sit here and say I think guys can score 80 or 90? Yeah, why not? It's been done before. Talent is talent no matter what generation it is—'50s, '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s all the way until now, talent is talent, and great basketball and great scorers are going to be great scorers no matter what era they're in. Once a great scorer gets going, there's really nothing you can do."

Pacers' Haliburton thrives in spotlight of busy NBA All-Star weekend

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton found himself playing a new role on NBA All-Star weekend—host.

He served as Indianapolis' unofficial ambassador. He became a part-time concierge, offering suggestions for restaurant choices and places to visit. He promoted the NBA's 2K esports league, even doubled as a ticket broker. He made a video thanking local fans for their support. And he did all of it in addition to his full-time job.

Yet Haliburton proved himself every bit as valuable, versatile and successful off the court over the past week as he's been on it this season—and did it all with a smile.

"It's been a zoo, it's been a lot, but it's been a lot of fun," he said Saturday afternoon still in the midst of this wild, whirlwind adventure. "I've been told I'm kind of like the prom king of the weekend, so I'm just doing whatever I'm asked to do."

The 23-year-old two-time All-Star never complained. He rarely does.

Instead, Haliburton thrived underneath the bright spotlight of one of the NBA's biggest stages, re-introducing basketball fans to the Pacers, his new hometown and himself as potentially the next star in Indiana's rich hoops tradition.

He shouldered everything from the seemingly endless interviews for TV and being mic'd up for the game to purchasing a luxury suite at the arena because it was more affordable to accommodate all of the ticket requests.

Many All-Star regulars such as LeBron James, Kevin Durant or Damian Lillard, have created plans to navigate what can be a grueling All-Star weekend schedule.

Few, though, play the starring role in front of their home fans. The closest James, Durant or Lillard came was two years ago when James, with the Lakers, returned to Cleveland. Stephen Curry might get his chance next season when San Francisco will host.

But Haliburton, the former Iowa State star who grew up in Wisconsin, got the opportunity in just his second All-Star trip.

The fourth-year pro cherished every moment—his grand entrance at Thursday night's inaugural Opening Celebration in a shiny, blue and gold No. 24 IndyCar; mingling with three Indiana Hall of Fame icons, Larry Bird, Reggie Miller and Oscar Robertson; cheering teammates Bennedict Mathurin and Oscar Tshiebwe in Friday night's Rising Stars games and winning Saturday night's skills challenge with Mathurin and Pacers center Myles Turner before being eliminated in a tiebreaking round of the 3-point contest.

Yet none of it affected Haliburton's play Sunday. He opened the game by making five consecutive 3s, finished with 32 points, seven rebounds and six assists on 11 of 15 shooting and went home after leaving quite an impression.

"His teammates love him, fans love him. I'm excited to watch his career going forward because I know he's going to do some incredible things here in Indiana," Durant said. "But just for the game of basketball as a whole, you can tell he's one of those point guards that the next generation, kids in elementary school, middle school kids will be looking up to."

While Haliburton's hosting duties ended Sunday night, his to-do list remains long.

With 26 games to play, he's trying to lead sixth-seeded Indiana to its first Eastern Conference playoff appearance in four years and his first as a player.

If the Pacers make it, they'll be trying to snap a franchise-record 10-game postseason losing streak and reach the second round for the first time in a decade. And if the Pacers are going to do any of it, Haliburton must lead the way.

He's averaging a career-best 21.8 points and leads the league for the second straight season in assists (11.7 per game), a pace that would be the league's second best since 1995-96 in a system Phoenix guard Devin Booker said is tailor-made for Haliburton and the NBA's highest-scoring team.

Can he do it? He helped eliminate Boston and Milwaukee from the In-Season Tournament before losing to the Lakers in the title game, and the Pacers are 10-6 against the top four teams in the East with all four season series complete.

Mike Trout says he wants to stay with Angels

By STEVE MEGARGEE
AP SPORTS WRITER

Mike Trout discussed his future and Anthony Rendon talked about his priorities as the Los Angeles Angels stars spoke Monday when position players started workouts at spring training camps across Arizona and Florida.

Trout, a three-time MVP and 11-time All-Star who has played in only one postseason series, said he has no interest in requesting a trade as the Angels retool following two-time MVP Shohei Ohtani's move to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The 32-year-old Trout has spent his entire 13-year career with the Angels and signed a $426.5 million, 12-year contract in 2019. The Angels went 73-89 last year for their eighth consecutive losing season. They haven't reached the playoffs since 2014, when they were swept by Kansas City in the Division Series.

"I think the easy way out is to ask for a trade," Trout told reporters, including The Athletic. "There might be a time, maybe. I really haven't thought about this. When I signed that contract, I'm loyal. I want to win a championship here. The overall picture of winning a championship or getting to the playoffs here is the bigger satisfaction than bailing out or taking the easy way out. I think that's been my mindset. Maybe down the road, if some things change."

Trout says he continued to lobby owner Arte Moreno and upper management for free-agent additions that can boost the Angels following the departure of Ohtani, who signed a $700 million, 10-year deal with the Dodgers.

AP

Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout smiles as he rounds third after hitting a solo home run during the first inning of a baseball game against the Arizona Diamondbacks Sunday, July 2, 2023, in Anaheim, Calif.

"I'm going to keep pushing as long as I can," Trout said. "Until the season starts or until those guys sign. It's just in my nature."

One big free-agent move the Angels did make in recent years was the signing of Rendon to a $245 million, seven-year deal in December 2019 as he was coming off a World Series title with Washington. Rendon, a two-time Silver Slugger winner in seven seasons with the Nationals, hasn't played more than 58 games in any of his four years with the Angels because of injuries.

Rendon spoke Monday about how his enthusiasm for the game has remained the same throughout his career, but he also noted that baseball has "never been a top priority for me."

"This is a job," Rendon told reporters. "I do this to make a living. My faith, my family come first before this job."

Rendon noted that getting married and having four kids has changed his perspective. But he also emphasized that baseball remains a priority, even if it isn't his top priority.

"Oh, it's a priority for sure," Rendon said. "Because it's my job. I'm here, aren't I?"

OHTANI TAKES LIVE BP

Ohtani took live batting practice for the first time this spring training as he returns from elbow surgery. The Dodgers posted video Monday of Ohtani homering.

The two-way player won't be pitching this season after surgery on his right elbow last September, but he's hoping to be ready for the season opener as a hitter.

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said Sunday that Ohtani won't play in the Dodgers' Cactus League opener Thursday against San Diego.

MERRIFIELD SIGNS

Philadelphia finalized their signing of three-time All-Star utilityman Whit Merrifield to an $8 million, one-year contract that includes a $7 million salary this year and an $8 million club option for 2025 with a $1 million buyout.

Merrifield, 35, batted .272 with 11 homers, 67 RBIs and 26 steals for the Toronto Blue Jays last season.

CONFIDENT YELICH

Christian Yelich remains confident Milwaukee can continue to contend even without departed ace Corbin Burnes and manager Craig Counsell.

After the Brewers won their third NL Central title in six years, Counsell left to manage the rival Chicago Cubs. The Brewers traded Burnes to Baltimore in a deal that brought them infielder Joey Ortiz and left-hander DL Hall.

Yelich, the 2018 NL MVP, is among veterans on a team relying heavily on younger players.

"I think that we have a chance to really surprise some people with the talent in this room," Yelich told reporters. "We usually always find a way to be competitive, be there at the end and give ourselves a chance."

METS SIGN VOIT

The New York Mets signed first baseman Luke Voit to a minor league deal that includes an invitation to major league camp.

Voit, 33, batted .221 with a .284 on-base percentage, no homers and four RBIs in 22 games with the Brewers last season after hitting 22 homers with the Padres and Nationals in 2022.

He has a .807 career OPS and hit an AL-leading 22 homers for the New York Yankees during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season.

CUBS' RICKETTS DISCUSSES BELLINGER

Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts talked about contract talks with free agent outfielder Cody Bellinger.

"There has been some discussions, but it just hasn't become a negotiation yet," Ricketts told reporters. "Until they're ready to really negotiate, there's not much we can do."

Bellinger, the 2019 NL MVP with the Dodgers, had a bounce-back season for the Cubs last year. Bellinger hit .307 with a .356 on-base percentage, 26 homers, 97 RBIs and 20 steals in 130 games.

He then declined his end of a $25 million mutual option.

ORIOLES ACQUIRE ORT FROM PHILLIES

The Baltimore Orioles acquired right-handed pitcher Kaleb Ort from the Phillies for cash.

Ort, 32, went 1-2 with a 6.26 ERA for the Boston Red Sox last season while making 21 appearances, including two starts. He struck out 24 and walked nine in 23 innings.

Yanks star arrives for spring training wearing a T-shirt saying: 'The generational Juan Soto'

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Juan Soto gave some new meaning to pride of the Yankees.

On his first day with his new team, the 25-year-old star outfielder walked into a news conference in the tent behind third base wearing a navy T-shirt with white print that proclaimed: "The generational Juan Soto."

"When you're really good, it's easy to have that confidence," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said Monday. "The resume that he has is pretty remarkable."

Soto's prediction for his production in a lineup alongside 2022 AL MVP Aaron Judge was as bold as the type on his chest.

"It's going to be two walks or it's going to be two gappers," Soto said.

A three-time All-Star, Soto was acquired from San Diego on Dec. 6 along with outfielder Trent Grisham for four pitchers and catcher Kyle Higashioka. Soto hit .275 with 35 homers, 109 RBIs and a .930 OPS in his only full season with the Padres, leaving him with a .284 average, 160 homers, 483 RBIs and a .946 OPS in six major league seasons that included a 2019 World Series title with Washington.

Soto is eligible for free agency after the World Series, so it's unclear whether he will become a longtime pinstriper like Lou Gehrig, subject of the 1942 movie "The Pride of the Yankees."

Boone had a conversation with Soto on Monday to ease the transition.

"As great a player as he is, and as much respect as he carries, still the new kid at the first day of school," the manager said.

Soto turned down a $440 million, 15-year offer from Washington, betting he would gain a better deal as a free agent after the 2024 season. The Nationals dealt him to San Diego in August 2022 and the Padres traded him as part of payroll cuts under new controlling owner Eric Kutsenda after missing the playoffs.

"You put the pressure on yourself," Soto said, "and at the end of the day I just try to throw that away and go out there and play baseball, just try to show what I have and try my best."

Boone had guided a star in a similar position two years ago when Judge set an AL record with 62 home runs, went to free agency and agreed to a $360 million, nine-year contract with New York.

"I don't think there's any way to not be aware of it as a player," Boone explained, adding "uber-focused attention to detail" can boost performance "but also that can get in their way a little bit, the pressure of that."

Born in the Dominican Republic, Soto looked forward to playing with the Yankees, who have a significant Latino fan base.

"It's going to be electric," he said. "It's going to feel like home."

Boone compared him with Barry Bonds.

"Barry Bonds would get pitched around all weekend long and the one pitch that showed up in the strike zone, he'd hit it in the McCovey Cove," Boone said.

Soto praised Robinson Canó, an eight-time All-Star second baseman who played for the Yankees from 2005-13 and was Soto's Dominican teammate at last year's World Baseball Classic.

"That's the guy who I followed since I was a little kid and a guy I want to be like," Soto said.

Soto has four homers in six career games and 23 at-bats in Yankee Stadium. He reminded himself not to let the ballpark impact his swing.

"Definitely don't go crazy with a short porch in right field," he said.

Soto is letting agent Scott Boras deal with contract talks. Most Boras clients in their prime wait until after becoming free agents to negotiate deals.

"I just let Scott do it," Soto said. "He's tough. I have a lot of trust in him and what he's going to do."

CARLOS RODÓN THROWS

After missing much of last season because of injuries, Carlos Rodón threw 44 pitches of one-field batting practice. Rodón shaved his mustache and lost weight, leading to better movement on the mound,

"That's something that was noticeable to us," Boone said. "In a lot of ways he looks like a different guy."

GLEYBER'S MUSTACHE

While Rodón eliminated facial hair, second baseman Gleyber Torres added some whiskers.

"I'm not totally on the mustache," Boone said.

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR

Kim claims Kingfisher Golf Links win

The queen of the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo last Feb. 17 was none other than SaeHee Kim.

This after the former resident of Tinian won the CNMI Women's Golf Association February Monthly Tournament.

The 6-handicapper humbled all comers with the 18-hole net score of 73 after she went 40 and 39 in the front and back nine for a gross score of 79.

Aside from hot weather, Kim said it was pretty much smooth sailing last Saturday.

"My putting was working so well Saturday was very hot. Although there was wind blowing, it was really hot. The course was very dry with lots of run," said the graduate of Tinian Elementary School and Tinian Junior/Senior High School.

The mother of five went on to dedicate her win to "my lovely and cheerful CWGA ladies!"

Flor Jones actually finished tied with Kim with her identical net 73 (gross of 87, 43-44), but lost via scorecard tiebreak. Chang Eun Ae and Jang Eun Ae completed the Top 4 with net scores of 75 (92, 46-46) and 77 (93, 49-4), respectively.

The rest of the field, with their scores in the parenthesis, are as follows: Lydia Tan (77); Nirimai Koebel (80); Yuko Togawa (82); Lorraine Babauta (84); Janet Torres (84); Dol Yamagishi (91); and Terry Guerrero (94).

The club continues to look for new members as the new season continues. For those interested in becoming a member of CWGA or for more information, contact CWGA president Yuko Togawa at 287-9856, vice president Lorraine Babauta at 287-0621, or treasurer Lou Kim at 783-7317.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
SaeHee Kim, fourth from left, poses with the rest of the participants of the CNMI Women's Golf Association February Monthly Tournament at the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo last Feb. 17.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
CNMI Women's Golf Association February Monthly Tournament champion SaeHee Kim.

PIRATES

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Pirates pitching then found themselves in a jam in the fourth inning, but managed to escape unscathed and hold on to their five-run lead. The Dodgers' offense came back to life in the fifth inning as Rich Quitugua and Aguon scored, but great defensive plays by the Pirates' shortstop saved them extra runs and put out their fire before it burned too hot.

Toward the end of the game, the Pirates felt like their lead was sufficient and didn't score anymore until their last at-bat, but it was more than enough to take the win after the Dodgers' bats turned ice cold from exceptional pitching by J.J. Laniyo and Sablan.

Tonight is Game 2 of the championship series. Will the Pirates win it all, or will the Dodgers win and force a tie-breaking third game this Friday? Catch the action at 6:30pm at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

LEIGH GASES
Dodgers' Ed Manibusan reacts to getting hit by a pitch during his at-bat against the Pirates in Game 1 of their championship series in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League last Monday at the Francsico "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

ABEL

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preferred it to be hot instead.

Abel also joined the mixed-up doubles match, but lost in the finals with junior partner Matthew Zhu against Loken and junior netter Emma Lang, 4-1, 5-3, 10-5. The mixed-up doubles is different from the regular mixed doubles matchup, wherein it's a mix of adult players and junior players.

In the men's singles 60+ division last Feb. 11, Dong Min Lee defeated John Bradley, 6-2, 6-1.

The 2024 Coconut Classic began last Feb. 9 to Feb. 11, then from Feb. 16 to last Monday and was organized by the Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association.

Results of the women's singles open and boys/girls divisions will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

LEIGH GASES
Peter Loken looks on as doubles partner Emma Lang connects with a serve during their semis match in the mixed doubles of the 2024 White Coconut Classic tennis tournament last Monday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

NMSA

From page 20

al Team that competed in the 2023 North Pacific Regional Championships in Guam and the North Pacific Team that played in the 2023 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji. He made it to the semis of the singles play in the POJC and finals in the U14 doubles.

Aldan was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for April. He topped the 100m and 400m sprints in the boys U9 division of the preliminary races in the PSS All Schools Athletics Championship. Aldan was later named MVP in his age group.

Shimizu was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for May. He claimed the U18 boys MVP award after earning 46 points. He got gold medals in the 400m and 800m races, silver in the 200M, was fifth in long jump, and helped MHS earn a gold medal in the 4X400 relay. Shimizu was also a member of the NMI U23 Men's National Football Team that defeated Guam in the Marianas Cup in August and was part of the NMI Men's National Football Team that competed in the 2023 Solomon Islands Pacific Games and beat American Samoa, 4-0.

Rodgers was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for June. He represented the NMI in the 2023 Oceania Cup and posted personal best times in the 100m (12.03) and 200m (24.88). He also anchored the NMI in the 4x100m and 4x400m mixed relay teams that set national records in the same event hosted on Saipan. Rodgers later in the year raced in the 100m and 200m events at the 2023 Solomon Islands Pacific Games. He clocked in at 24.15 seconds in the 200m race to reach the semis.

Gimed of weightlifting was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for July. He won gold in the Philippine National Weightlifting Championship held in Bacolod, Philippines in July. He competed in the 73-kg youth category and won with his snatch of 70 kg (154 lbs) and a clean & jerk of 80 kg(191.4 lbs) for a total of 157 kg (355.4 lbs). Earlier in March, Gimed won gold in the Marianas Cup 2023 with a snatch of 66kg and clean & jerk of 77 kg for a total weight of 143 kg. Gimed also participated in the Guam Open National Championships 2023.

Toves was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for August. He was named the men's most valuable player in the 2023 Marianas Football Cup held in August. He scored two goals in the NMI's 3-1 win over Guam in Game 2 of their two-game series to give the host the victory following an aggregate goal score of 3-1. Toves also played for the NMI Men's National Team in the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands and scored the NMI's lone goal against Tuvalu.

Pajarillaga was named the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for September. He set a CNMI national record in the 200m backstroke during the Junior World Championship in Israel. His time of 2:16.69 beat the nine-year NMI record time (2:18.04) that Kensuke Kimura logged in 2014. Pajarillaga was also part of the NMI relay team that won two bronze medals in the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands.

Tyler Andrew was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for October. He represented Saipan Paddling Club in the 2023 Micronesian Cup in Guam and helped SPC sweep the V6 Junior Division races. He also joined SPC's men's open team that won the gold medal in the 1,000m and bronze in the 10-mile race. Andrew later represented the NMI at the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands.

Aleksenko was the NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Month for November. He was Team NMI's flag bearer in the opening ceremony for the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands. In the swimming competition of the Pacific Games, he won a gold medal in the 200m butterfly event and bronze in the 100m butterfly, 4x200m freestyle relay, and 4x100m individual medley relay. In July, he also represented the NMI to the FINA World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan where he set both age group (17 to 18) and national records in the 50m backstroke (26.94 seconds), 100m backstroke (58.58 seconds), and 100m butterfly (54.46 seconds).

The Female Student Athlete of the Year nominees are Anniegail Manuel of weightlifting; Lina Tsukagoshi of badminton; Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez of athletics; Casey Cruz of athletics; Maria Batallones of swimming; Summer Manahane of soccer; and Jinie Thompson of swimming.

Manuel was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for March. She won a gold medal in the 71-kg class in the 2023 Marianas Cup held on Saipan in March after recording 65 kg in snatch, 80 kg in clean & jerk, and 145 kg in total weight. Early in February, she also took home a gold medal in the junior female 71 kg category in the Guam Olympic Weightlifting Championships with a lift of 60 kg in the snatch and a lift of 77 kg in the clean & jerk for a total weight of 137 kg.

Tsukagoshi was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for April. She clinched five titles in the Tan Holdings 50th Anniversary Badminton Tournament held in April. She won the girls U15 singles, U15 doubles (with Danielle Snaer), girls U19 singles and doubles (with Snaer anew), and women's open doubles (with Janelle Pangilinan). Tsukagoshi also competed in the NMI National Badminton Championships 2023 and topped the U17 mixed doubles (with Marlon Bautista) and women's open doubles (with Pangilinan). Tsukagoshi was part of the NMI Junior National Team that competed in the Inaugural Pacific Under 15 Invitation Team Challenge in New Zealand and also represented the NMI Junior Tennis Team in the 2023 North Pacific Regional Championships in Guam and in the Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji.

Chavez was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for May. She ruled the 400m, 800m, and 1,500m races in the girls U18 division of the PSS McDonald's All Schools Championship and was named MVP of the competition held in May. Chavez also competed for the NMI in the Oceania Cup in June and broke the NMI's 24-year record in the 800m after timing in at 2:29.24. In soccer, Chavez played for the NMI in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Palestine, AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Thailand, Marianas Cup in Saipan, and EAFF Women's Preliminary Competition in China. She scored in each of four competitions—the only player on the national team to do so. Chavez was also named NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for October for earning All Island Top Honors in the 5K race in the Asia Pacific Cross Country Championships held in Guam.

Cruz was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for June. She competed for the NMI in the Oceania Cup and set personal best times in the 100m (13.28 seconds) and 200m (27.54 seconds) sprints. Cruz also raced in the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands and reset her PBs with times of 13.07 seconds (100m) and 27.48 seconds (200m).

Batallones was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for July. She participated in the World Championships in Japan in July and set the age group record (girls 15 to 16) and NMI national record in the 50m breaststroke (35.96 seconds). Then in November at the 2023 Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands, she reset the records in the same event after submitting 35.09 seconds in the 50m breaststroke. Batallones also raced in the 100m and 200m breaststroke and the 4x50m and 4x100m medley and 4x100m and 4mx200m freestyle relays.

Manahane was the NMSA Female Student Athlete of the Month for August. She was named the Women's Most Valuable Player for the 2023 Marianas Football Cup held in August. She scored in both games against Guam, lifting the NMI to a convincing 5-1 win in Game 1 and 2-0 victory in Game 2. The 17-year-old Manahane is a student at Saipan Southern High School and in addition to her regular training under the NMI Women's National Team program, she plays in the youth and women's leagues under club teams, and even in the men's league with the women's national developmental team. Manahane was also among the 14 elite high school runners who participated in the Asia Pacific Cross Country Championships held in Guam in October.

Thompson was the Female Student Athlete of the Month for September. She set a CNMI age group record (17 to 18) in the 50m breaststroke event (40.10 seconds) at the Junior World Championship in Israel in September. Thompson topped the 1,500m event in the Tan Holding 50th Anniversary Swim Meet held in February.

The Male/Female Athlete of the Year nominees will be posted in the next issue of *Saipan Tribune.*

NBA's scoring boom still going strong, some wonder if that's a good thing.

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Sports

Kim claims Kingfisher Golf Links win.

PAGE 19

Abel wins Coconut Classic men's open

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Tomas Abel found himself in the finals to start off his bid in the men's open singles of the 2024 White-Coconut Classic and won last Monday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

The tourney's Sunday games were rained out, so they had to cut each of the matches short with no deuces—and Abel quickly won over Peter Loken, 5-4, 5-3.

The 44-year-old Abel was the top seed and his first opponent could not make it to their match, so with not a lot of players, all he had to do was wait for an opponent to challenge in the finals. He had hoped to have played more games, but some players in his division were off island.

"My first match was the finals. It sounds like a good thing but it's not really. I prefer obviously to have played everybody and earned my way in there, and it's tougher because you don't get a rhythm going," he said.

Even with the shortened game and tourney for Abel, he said it was a good finals match against Loken. "Peter played great. We played for I think an hour-and-a-half even though we only played up to 40, but it was a good match."

Abel said of the tourney, "it was too bad that not a lot of guys were able to play because some of them are traveling, so it was a smaller group of people. But it was still good quality."

The windy and overcast weather didn't faze him as much as he said he's used to it, but had

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LEIGH GASES
Tomas Abel runs to return a serve during his mixed doubles match up in the 2024 White Coconut Classic tennis tournament last Monday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

NMSA announces 2023 Male/Female Student Athlete of the Year nominees

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

ATHLETES of the YEAR

The Northern Marianas Sports Association announced the 2023 Male/Female Student Athlete of the Year nominees, with the winners to be awarded tomorrow, Wednesday, Feb. 21, during the 2023 NMSA Annual Awards Banquet at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

The Coach of the Year, Administrator of the Year, and CNMI Sports Hall of Fame have no nominees and the winners will be announced at the banquet.

The Male Student Athlete of the Year nominees are Jaden Andrew of weightlifting; Si Woo Lee of tennis; Dean Aldan of athletics; Cody Shimizu of athletics; Theodore Rodgers of athletics; Aiden Gimed of weightlifting; Markus Attao-Toves of soccer; Kean Pajarillaga of swimming; Tyler Andrew of va'a; and Isaiah Aleksenko of swimming.

Jaden Andrew was the Male Student Athlete of the Month for February. He won second place in the Guam National Youth/Jr./Sr Championships. His best snatch was 62kg (136.69lbs), his clean & jerk best was 82 kg(180.79lbs) for a total of 144 kg. (317.47lbs).

Lee was the Male Student Athlete of the Month for March. He bagged both the boys U14 and U16 singles championship in the Bridge Capital Tennis Classic held in March. Lee also won the boys U16 singles crown in the 2023 NMI Crowne Plaza Junior Tennis Championship. The Mount Carmel School student was part of the NMI Junior Nation-

See NMSA on Page 19

J. Andrew

Aleksenko

T. Andrew

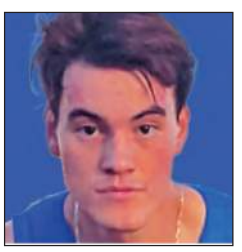
Gimed

Shimizu

Pajarillaga

Aldan

Lee


Rodgers

Manuel

Tsukagoshi

Chavez

Cruz

Batallones

Manahane

Thompson

Pirates strike 1st in Masters finals

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Pirates struck first to start off the best-of-three championship series in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League on a manic Monday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

They held off the Dodgers, 10-6, after scoring the majority of their runs in the first three innings, and their pitchers dominating the mound.

The Dodgers had the first at-bat and James Benavente led things off with a double, followed by a base on balls to Derek Aguon. Both rounded the bases for a two-run lead before Pirates pitcher Bill Camacho said enough and registered three outs.

The Pirates evened the game quickly though as Jerome Delos Santos and Mark Toves scored—and with a whip of the bat, Audie Maratita sent the ball flying past the fence for a homerun that put them up, 4-2.

Teammate Eric Palacios then hit a double and scored the fifth run before the end of the first inning.

The next inning saw another homerun—but this time by the Dodgers' Ed Manibusan who hit a two-run jack that brought home John Acosta. That was all the damage they could do however, as Camacho quickly shut down the next three batters.

The Pirates still had a one-run lead, but clamored for more—and delivered as they scored two at the bottom of the second for a 7-4 lead. The Dodgers had minimal activity in the third inning which the Pirates capitalized on and continued to add to their lead with another two-run inning by Delos Santos and Pete Sablan to make it 9-4.

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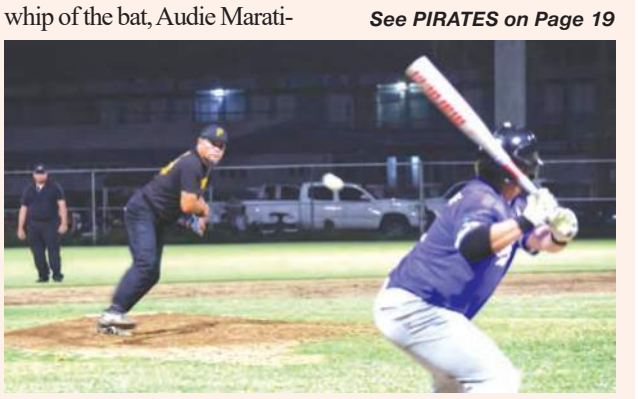

LEIGH GASES
Pirates starting pitcher Bill Camacho delivers a strike to a Dodgers batter in Game 1 of their championship series in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League last Monday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.